DUST MAY CAUSE BLOOD PRESSURE SPIKES

THE RESEARCH:

Scientists have extensively studied the health repercussions of fine particulate matter (particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, such as combustion chemicals), but less is known about the effects coarse particulate matter (those between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in diameter, like construction dust) have on health. So researchers from the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and the University of Maryland decided to find out. The team measured the blood pressure of 29 healthy adults exposed to two hours of ambient coarse air in urban Dearborn, Mich., and compared it with their levels after two hours of filtered air.

THE RESULTS:

Researchers found that both systolic (arterial pressure during a heartbeat) and diastolic blood pressure (arterial pressure between heartbeats) levels spiked during exposure to coarse particulate matter. This discovery supports the hypothesis that coarse particles can interfere with blood flow to the heart.

THE TAKEAWAY:

As more people migrate to cities for economic opportunity, we can expect more construction and heavier traffic on already congested roads, leading to increased coarse particulate matter. When the air outside offers little relief, it's important to have a breath of fresh air waiting at home.