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האגודה למלחמה בסרטן - 90336					

Lung cancer rate for Haifa women 26% higher than national average

Cancer Association: Link between environment and cancer not proven

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The lung cancer rate in the Haifa area is 26 percent higher than the national average for women and 16 percent higher for men, according to figures released yesterday by the Israel Cancer Association and the Health Ministry.

The Haifa Bay area is a center of heavy industry, including pharmaceutical and chemical processing plants, oil refineries and a power plant.

But though environmental pollution has been identified as a potential cause of cancer, the Israel Cancer Association and Health Ministry warned Israelis not to jump to conclusions, saying additional research is necessary to prove any connection between the higher cancer rates and the environment.

"There is no way to draw a direct connection be-

tween environmental pollution and cancer morbidity," the cancer association said in a statement.

"The findings can be the result of numerous factors about which we have no details, like work exposure, the health behaviors of individuals (for example, smoking, or doing tests for early cancer detection), or personal, genetic and other family risk factors.

Only a dedicated, analytical study that would collect data on various factors at the individual level can give us a clearer explanation for the differences in morbidity among the regions."

All the same, lung cancer is a form of the disease that is particularly susceptible to air pollution. The World Health Organization has said pollution caused by fine particulate matter, which is released into the air by power plants and other sources, is estimated to cause about

16 percent of lung cancer deaths worldwide.

Elsewhere in the country, lung cancer is 25 percent more common than average for men in Acre and 20 percent more for women in Tel Aviv.

Lung cancer incidence is particularly low in Jerusalem, Safed and Ramle, and the overall cancer rate was lowest in the Jerusalem and Sharon regions.

Cancer has been the No. 1 cause of death in Israel since 1999, today accounting for a quarter of deaths in the country.

At a press conference yesterday, the cancer association said the overall can-

cer rate among men in Acre between 2006 and 2011 was 16 percent higher than the national average, and 11 percent higher among women.

In Haifa the prevalence among both men and women was 15 percent higher than the national average. The relative cancer rate in Haifa rose from 10 percent above average in 2001-2005 to 15 percent in 2006-2011.

Other locations where illness rates exceeding the national average include Hadera (6 percent); Ashkelon (5 percent); and Tel Aviv (3 percent).

There are also regional differences in the death rates from cancer.

Between 2006 and 2010, the death rates in Jerusalem region, Petah Tikva, Rehovot and the Sharon were 5 percent lower than the national average.

Parts of the country with higher-than-average mortality rates include the Hadera area (7 percent higher), Be'er Sheva (6 percent), the Haifa area (4 percent) and Tel Aviv (2 percent).

Haifa is also one of the regions with a higher than average incidence of prostate cancer, at 8 percent above the national average. Only Ashkelon (13 percent) and Rehovot (12 percent) are higher.