

Lousy Living and Horrendous Housing

So many people moved to towns during the Industrial Revolution that there were not enough houses. Builders and landlords, who were keen on making large profits, built thousands of new houses but they crammed as many people in as possible and often used the cheapest building materials. Rents were high so whole families had to live in a single room. Sometimes they even took in lodgers to earn extra money. There was little privacy and infectious diseases spread easily.

Damp - housing for the poor was often badly built. With earth floors, single brick walls and poor roofing materials, the houses were damp.

Hygiene - it was hard for people wash their clothes and themselves. Many people had body lice. Food storage was a problem too. Diseases like typhoid, typhus and diarrhoea flourished. Even royalty and the rich were not safe.

Rubbish - In many towns there was no effective system for collecting rubbish. The piles of rotting rubbish in courtyards and streets were breeding grounds for disease.

Sewage - this was a major problem as most houses were built without sewers or toilets. The houses usually shared a privy, which might be built over a stream or cesspit. Sewage leaked into the water supply. As the pits were not regularly emptied they often overflowed, particularly in wet weather. They stank and were also a breeding ground for disease.

Poor ventilation - with houses built so close together it was difficult to get either fresh air or light into the room.

Drinking water - most houses did not have piped water. People had to get water from cisterns, stand pipes, wells, streams or rivers. The waste of the town polluted all of these. This meant that water-carried diseases like cholera could easily spread.



Housing

Due to the overcrowding in cities there was not enough housing for everyone. It meant the rents were high and quality of housing was poor. Conditions were cramped but the quality of building was often sub-standard.

Housing for the poor was often badly built. With earth floors, single brick walls and poor roofing materials, the houses were **damp**. As houses were built so closely together it was difficult to get fresh air or light into the rooms. This is known as **poor ventilation**. Damp and poor ventilation meant that diseases spread more easily.



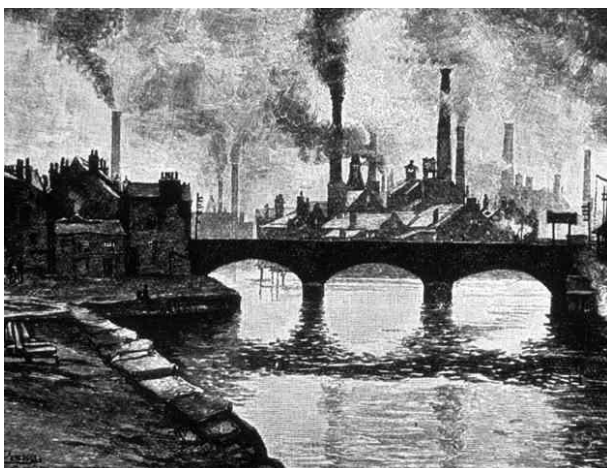
Hygiene

As it was hard to get water, people found it difficult to wash themselves, their clothing, their bedding and their cooking utensils. Many people had body lice. Food storage was a problem too. These were ideal conditions for killer diseases like **typhus, typhoid and diarrhoea** to flourish. The cause of cholera was simple – sewage was allowed to come into contact with drinking water and **contaminated** it. As many people used river water as their source of drinking water, the disease spread with ease. Typhoid was spread by contaminated water. One famous victim was Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, who died from typhoid in 1861 at the age of 42. Even royalty and the rich were not safe from disease.



Environment

By the 1860s nearly all workshops and factories were powered by coal-burning steam engines, so the tall chimneys belched out smoke all day, every day. **Coal** was also used for heating houses and for cooking. This household smoke made the air pollution even worse. London, a main area of the Industrial Revolution became notorious for **smog**, a chemical compound of smoke and fog, which was constantly present in the skies. In 1873 approximately 700 Londoners died from smog inhalation in one day. In many towns there was no effective system for collecting rubbish. The piles of rotting rubbish in courtyards and streets were breeding grounds for **diseases**. Without a modern sewage system, nearly everyone was dumping human waste into these cities' rivers. Consequently, outbreaks of **typhoid and cholera**, two diseases borne from human waste, occurred in many towns and cities.



Population

As a result of the Industrial Revolution people flocked to cities in order to find work. For example, in 1750 there were 675,000 people living London while in 1901 there were 4,563,000. This is an increase of almost 700%. As a result there were not enough houses. Builders and landlords, who were keen to make large profits, built thousands of new homes but they crowded as many as possible in and often used the cheapest building materials. **Rents** were high so whole families lived in a single room. Sometimes they even took in lodgers to earn extra money. There was **little privacy**.



Water

Most houses did not have piped water. People had to get water from cisterns (underground container for the collection of rain water) , stand pipes, wells streams or rivers. The waste of the town polluted all of these. This meant that water-carried diseases like Cholera could easily spread. Sewage was a major problem as most homes were built without sewers. Usually the houses shared a privy, which might be built over a stream or, more likely, a cesspit. Since many cesspits were not lined, the sewage could seep into the water supply. As the pits were not regularly emptied they often overflowed, particularly in wet weather. They stank and were also a breeding ground for disease.

