

Aggressive treatment of childhood eczema could help prevent asthma

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The study, published online in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, calls for trials of aggressive therapies against childhood eczema in attempt to reduce the incidence of asthma in later life.

The study, conducted by the University of Melbourne, Monash University and Menzies Research Institute in Tasmania, has followed more than 8500 people who are part of the Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study from the ages of seven to 44.

Leader author John Burgess, from the University of Melbourne's Melbourne School of Population Health, says the study is the first to demonstrate an association between childhood eczema and asthma into middle age.

The study found people who had childhood eczema were more likely to develop childhood asthma, new-onset asthma later in life or to have asthma which persisted from childhood into middle age.

Dr Burgess said childhood eczema increased the risk of someone developing asthma well into adulthood.

"The incidence of asthma in people from the ages of 8 to 44 who had childhood eczema, was nearly double that of people who had never had eczema," Dr. Burgess said.

Dr Burgess said the study's findings also supported the concept of the

"atopic march", in which eczema is often the first step in an allergic process that leads on to asthma or hayfever in later life.

"The results of our study showed childhood eczema clearly preceded asthma in each later stage of life – later childhood, adolescence, and adulthood," he said. "This makes a strong argument for trialing aggressive therapies against childhood eczema to help reduce the burden of asthma later in life."

Source: University of Melbourne

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