

Childhood Asthma Found to Negatively Affect Adult Health

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Children with asthma are more likely to develop a range of health and social problems as they enter into adulthood, new research by the Yale School of Public Health has found. The study is published in this month's issue of the Journal of Health Economics.

Researchers found significant long-term consequences for children who suffer from the chronic breathing condition, including an increased likelihood of adult obesity and increased absenteeism from either school or work.

[Childhood asthma](#) affects nearly 10 percent of children, but there has been little research on its long-term consequences, both physically and in terms of socioeconomic costs.

“Results from this analysis suggest that the prevalence of asthma early in life may have important [negative consequences](#) for future health and well-being,” said Jason M. Fletcher, an assistant professor in the division of Health Policy and Administration and the study’s lead author. “The long-term health effects of childhood asthma appear to be as severe as those associated with other major childhood health conditions such as AD/HD or low birth-weight.”

Specifically, the researchers found that children with asthma have a 12 percentage point higher risk of adult obesity. This may be due to certain [lifestyle choices](#) adopted in childhood—such as avoiding routine or vigorous exercise—in order to avoid triggering asthma attacks, they note.

The study also found that young adults who suffered from childhood asthma had sharply increased rates of absenteeism—by as much as 50 percent—from school and work. People who grew up with the [chronic condition](#) were also significantly less likely to report that they were in excellent health.

The findings suggest that behavioral reactions to asthma in childhood can have lasting impacts and that some health resources should be reallocated to younger people with asthma to instill better habits. Waiting and treating asthma-related problems in adults can be very costly because it often requires undoing years of cumulative damage, note the researchers.

The researchers plan to examine additional long-term consequences of childhood [asthma](#), such as earnings, physical activities and limitations, and other adult health conditions, as well as examining the mechanisms of the links.

Provided by Yale University

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