

# Bacteria to blame in asthma attacks in children

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Doctors have long known that viral infections can bring about asthma attacks and the shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing associated with them. But while viral infections cannot be treated, scientists at the Danish Paediatric Asthma Centre at the University of Copenhagen and Copenhagen University Hospital have discovered that treatable bacterial infections can also cause asthma attacks. The discovery could revolutionize treatment.

"We found a significant relationship between bacterial infections and acute asthma attacks - above and beyond the expected relationship between [viral infections](#) and attacks," says Hans Bisgaard, a professor of paediatrics at the DPAC.

The study examined 361 children between the ages of four weeks and three years to determine the presence of viral and bacterial infections during severe asthma attacks. The results conclude that the number of attacks was just as high in children with bacterial respiratory infections as in those with viral infections.

"This indicates that [bacteria](#) can exacerbate asthma symptoms even if they aren't infected with a virus," Professor Bisgaard says. "The findings open up an entirely new method for treating severe asthma attacks. We can't treat viral infections, but scientists will now look into whether treatment with antibiotics can help children when they have an [asthma attack](#) if they are also suffering from a bacterial infection."

"Being able to use antibiotics to treat asthma attacks in children would be revolutionary," Professor Bisgaard says.

The effects of antibiotics in treating [asthma](#) attacks will now be examined in large-scale, clinical study by the DPAC.

The research has been published in *British Medical Journal* on 4 October 2010.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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