

Stressed-out mums may worsen their child's asthma

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Mums who are often angry or irritated and those who suppress their emotional expressions can worsen the severity of their children's asthma symptoms, especially when the children are younger. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access journal *BioPsychoSocial Medicine* studied 223 mothers for a year , investigating how their stress levels, coping styles and parenting styles were associated with their 2 to 12 year old children's disease status.

Jun Nagano, from the Kyushu University Institute of Health Science, Fukuoka, Japan, worked with a team of researchers to carry out the study. Mothers' tendencies to reject, dominate, overprotect and indulge their [children](#) were assessed by questionnaire, as were their specific kinds of [chronic stress](#) and coping styles. Over-interference stemming from excessive protectiveness was found to be associated with worsening asthma of older children (over 7 years). For those under seven, a mother's chronic irritation and anger, or a tendency to suppress her emotional expressions, was predictive of a more severe disease in the subsequent year, while no specific type of parenting styles was.

'Adherence', a mother's obedience to medical advice, did not explain such associations. According to Nagano, "A mother's stress (or wellbeing) may be verbally or non-verbally conveyed to her child, and affect the child's asthmatic status via a psycho-physiological pathway, such as by immunoreactivity to [allergens](#) or a vulnerability to airway infections".

He concluded, "Our results suggest that the [mothers](#) of younger children may be advised not to worry about falling into 'unfavorable' parenting styles, but to pay more attention to the reduction of their own stress; and that the mothers of older children may be encouraged to increase their own wellbeing via proper egocentric and self-defensive activities, being careful to avoid too much interference with their children."

More information: The parenting attitudes and the stress of mothers predict the asthmatic severity of their children: a prospective study, Jun Nagano, Chikage Kakuta, Chikako Motomura, Hiroshi Odajima, Nobuyuki Sudo, Sankei Nishima and Chiharu Kubo, *BioPsychoSocial Medicine* (in press), www.bpsmedicine.com/

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