

Childhood eczema and hay fever leads to adult allergic asthma

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Children who have eczema, particularly when occurring with hay fever, are nine times more likely to develop allergic asthma in their 40s, a new study reveals.

The study was conducted by the University of Melbourne, the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Menzies Research Institute and Monash University.

Published online in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, the study reported on evidence from a clinical study of around 1400 grown up participants in the fifth decade follow-up of the Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study (TAHS) which is the largest of its kind in the world.

In the TAHS, participants were assessed about their allergies and childhood environment in 1968, at seven years of age, and were followed up in 2004, at the age of 44.

Lead author Pamela Martin, a University of Melbourne PhD student based at the Murdoch Children Research Institute analysed the survey and skin prick testing data collected in the clinical study for the evidence of childhood eczema and [hay fever](#) leading to adult [asthma](#).

She said “In this study we see that childhood eczema, particularly when hay fever also occurs, is a very strong predictor of who will suffer from allergic asthma in adult life.”

“The implications of this study are that prevention and rigorous treatment of childhood eczema and hay fever may prevent the persistence and development of asthma.”

She also said this is the first study to distinguish between allergic and non-allergic asthma and their occurrence after childhood eczema and hay fever, as part of a sequence of allergic illnesses dubbed the ‘atopic march’.

Associate Professor Shyamali Dharmage, principal investigator of the TAHS and from the University of Melbourne’s School of Population Health said currently few interventions are trialled to halt this march from childhood allergies to asthma.

“If successful strategies to stop the ‘atopic march’ are identified, this could ultimately save lives and health care costs related to asthma management and treatment.”

The researchers estimate that up to 30 per cent of current [allergic asthma](#) within the larger population sample could be attributed to a history of childhood [eczema](#) and hay fever.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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