

Study explores why children with asthma are more likely to be bullied

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New research has uncovered several factors which could explain why children with asthma are at an increased risk of being bullied.

The study, presented today at the European Respiratory Society's Annual Congress in Vienna, highlights the need for doctors to talk to children with asthma about bullying, as well as the impact the disease could be having in other areas of their life.

Bullying or teasing of children with any [chronic medical condition](#) is common, yet it is not always clear what factors contribute to this. Researchers from the Derbyshire Children's Hospital, in the UK, used data from the large six-country "Room to Breathe" survey of [childhood asthma](#), to look at the factors associated with an increased risk of bullying.

Parents and children aged 7 years and above were interviewed as part of the study. Data was collected from 943 [questionnaires](#) which asked questions about conditions at home, lifestyle of parents and children and their overall experience of their condition.

The results revealed a number of factors associated with an increased risk of bullying. Factors such as a reduced participation with sport and [feelings](#) of [sadness](#) were significantly associated with an increased risk of bullying. Additionally, factors that could be improved, such as poor asthma control, parental smoking and parents' on-going [worries](#) about their child's health, were also associated with bullying.

Dr Will Carroll, from the Derbyshire Children's Hospital, said: "Our findings emphasise the need for doctors and nurses to speak to their patients about the effects their condition has on all aspects of their life. We know that bullying is associated with asthma and these findings can help us understand why this is case.

"A number of the factors identified are things that can be changed, such as participation in sport, asthma control and parental worry over their child's health. As doctors, we must work with families to ensure these [risk factors](#) are removed and work with schools and teachers to ensure children with asthma are able to participate in sports at a level that is safe for them."

David Supple, the parent of an asthma sufferer, said: ""When you have a child with exercise-induced [asthma](#) it can be really hard to get them to participate. You can be scared to push them - but the health and social benefits far outweigh the fear, and can help build a lifetime of confidence against bullying. We have made a real effort to include our son, Alex in as much sport as we can to ensure that he isn't excluded from different groups and to keep a wide balance of friends."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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