

New research reveals swimming beneficial for young people with asthma

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New research by medical students working in the Breathe Well Centre of Research Excellence at the UTAS School of Medicine has revealed swimming has health benefits for young people with asthma, with no adverse effects on asthma control or exacerbations.

Asthma is a common condition among children and adolescents causing intermittent wheezing, coughing and chest tightness and is the main reason why Tasmanian children present at emergency departments or are hospitalised.

Director of Paediatric Education at the Royal Hobart Hospital Dr Sean Beggs, who assisted in the research, said concerns that [physical exercise](#) such as swimming could worsen asthma, had the potential to reduce participation, resulting in reduced [physical fitness](#).

"The review aimed to determine the effectiveness and safety of swimming training in children and adolescents with asthma aged 18 years and under," Dr Beggs said.

"Our research found swimming training is well-tolerated in children and adolescents with stable asthma, and increases physical and cardio-pulmonary fitness as well as [lung function](#)."

In 2011, the Asthma Foundation of Tasmania (AFT) provided funding to jointly support students Yi Chao Foong, Hong C Le and Danial Noor, undertaking their first health professional degree, to conduct the asthma

review. The review was co-supervised by UTAS' Dr Julia Walters who heads the health services theme within the Centre of [Research Excellence](#).

AFT [Chief Executive Officer](#) Cathy Beswick said the outcome of the project would ensure swimmers with respiratory problems achieved the best outcomes when trying to improve their health.

"Anecdotally it is understood swimming is an outstanding form of exercise for children and adults with asthma, but there have been concerns that it might have an impact on [asthma control](#) or even induce [exacerbations](#)," Ms Beswick said.

"This research provides a strong scientific foundation for deciding who to recommend this form of exercise to and the type of exercise they should undertake."

Ms Beswick said the student scholarship was awarded following an agreement with the UTAS School of Medicine, continuing the Australian Satellite of the Cochrane Airways Group's scholarship scheme.

"The Australian Satellite of the Cochrane Airways Group's scholarship scheme facilitates the activities of the Cochrane Collaboration, which encourages individuals to work together to provide the best evidence for health care," Ms Beswick said.

"Our funding has ensured a future for the scholarship scheme in Tasmania, meaning greater knowledge and insight into asthma and other respiratory diseases in our population."

The Tasmanian asthma research reviewed evidence from eight studies involving 262 participants and combined the results to see if swimming was a safe and beneficial activity for young people.

The review, titled "Swimming training for asthma in children and adolescents aged 18 years and under," has been published online together with a podcast of the findings in the *Cochrane Library*.

Provided by University of Tasmania

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