

Depressive symptoms linked to adult-onset asthma in African-American women

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According to a new study from the Slone Epidemiology Center (SEC) at Boston University, African-American women who reported high levels of depressive symptoms had a greater likelihood of adult-onset asthma compared to women who reported fewer depressive symptoms.

The study, which currently appears online in the journal *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, was led by Patricia Coogan, DSc, senior epidemiologist at SEC and research professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health.

This study followed 31,848 African-American women between 1999 and 2011, all of whom are participants in the Black Women's Health Study (BWHS) who completed health questionnaires every two years. In 1999 and 2005 they rated the frequency of experiencing 20 symptoms (e.g., "I felt depressed", "I felt lonely", "I could not get going"). The 20 answers were summed into a scale ranging from zero (rarely or never experiencing depressive symptoms) to 60 (experiencing all depressive symptoms "most or all of the time"). The scale is commonly used in epidemiologic studies and a score of 16 has been used to identify individuals at high risk of depression.

The results indicated that as the frequency of depressive symptoms increased, the incidence of adult-onset [asthma](#) also rose, up to a two-fold increase in women in the highest category (score of ≥ 33) compared to the lowest category (score

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