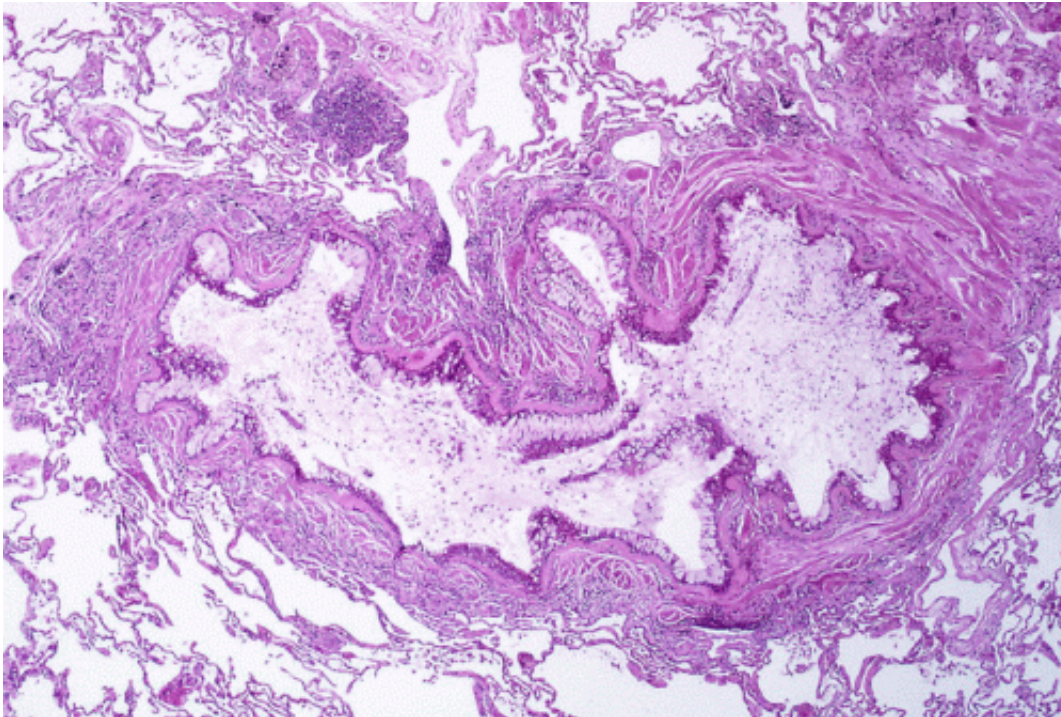


Sleeping on animal fur in infancy found to reduce risk of asthma

September 8 2014



Obstruction of the lumen of a bronchiole by mucoid exudate, goblet cell metaplasia, and epithelial basement membrane thickening in a person with asthma. Credit: Yale Rosen/Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 2.0

Sleeping on animal fur in the first three months of life might reduce the risk of asthma in later childhood a new study has found.

The new research, presented at the European Respiratory Society (ERS)

International Congress in Munich today (8 September 2014), suggests that exposure to the microbial environment in animal skin and fur could have a [protective effect](#) against asthma and allergies.

Previous studies have suggested that exposure to a wider range of environments from young [age](#) could be protective against asthma and allergies. These findings have not been confirmed conclusively in urban settings. In this new study, researchers investigated [children](#) from a city environment who had been exposed to animal skin by sleeping on the material shortly after birth.

Data from a German birth cohort called Lisaplust were used. The cohort included over 3,000 healthy newborns who were mainly recruited in 1998.

The researchers collected information on exposure to animal skin during the first three months of life, along with information on the health of children until the age of 10 years. Information on 2,441 children was used in the study, with 55% of those included sleeping on animal skin in the first three months of life.

The results showed that sleeping on animal skin was associated with a reduced risk of a number of factors connected to asthma. The chance of having asthma at the age of 6 years was 79% lower in children who had slept on animal skin after birth compared with those who were not exposed to animal skin. The risk decreased to 41% by the age of 10.

Dr Christina Tischer, from the Helmholtz Zentrum München Research Centre, said: "Previous studies have suggested that microbes found in rural settings can protect from [asthma](#). An [animal skin](#) might also be a reservoir for various kinds of microbes, following similar mechanisms as has been observed in rural environments. Our findings have confirmed that it is crucial to study further the actual microbial environment within

the animal fur to confirm these associations."

More information: Abstract: Sleeping on animal fur in the first three months of life reduces the risk of asthma in later childhood, Monday 8 September, 10.45-12.45

Provided by European Lung Foundation

Citation: Sleeping on animal fur in infancy found to reduce risk of asthma (2014, September 8) retrieved 20 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-animal-fur-infancy-asthma.html>

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