

Job loss fears may boost first-time asthma risk

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Job loss fears may boost the risk of developing asthma for the first time, indicates research published online in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*.

The findings back up other epidemiological studies pointing to a link between the development of [asthma](#) and stress, particularly work related stress, say the researchers.

They base their findings on just over 7000 working adults, who responded to the German Socio-Economic Panel Study—an annual representative survey of the German population—in 2009 and 2011, when questions about asthma were asked.

The survey covered a period of severe economic downturn across Europe, which began in 2008. And all respondents were asked in 2009 how likely they thought it was that they might lose their job over the next two years.

Their answers were graded in 10% increments from 0-100%, and divided into high versus low or no threat. The researchers used a cut-off point of a 50% or greater likelihood of unemployment versus a less than 50% probability.

Between 2009 and 2011, 105 new cases of asthma were diagnosed among the survey group, half of whom were women.

Those who felt that the likelihood of losing their job over the next two years was high tended to be slightly younger, had reached a lower level of education, a lower monthly income, and were more likely to be single than those who felt the risk was low (2787) or non-existent (2593).

And those who didn't feel their tenure was secure were less likely to be on permanent contracts and more likely to have been diagnosed with depression.

After taking into account various sociodemographic factors, depression, and lifestyle, the analysis indicated that asthma risk seemed to rise with increasing job insecurity. For every 25% increase in the perceived threat of job loss, the risk of asthma rose by 24%.

Among those who believed that they were very likely to lose their job the risk of asthma rose to 60% compared with those who thought [job loss](#) was unlikely or non-existent.

This is an observational study, so no definitive conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect. But the researchers say their results are "consistent with [epidemiological studies](#), which have shown that psychological stress in particular work related stress, may be risk factors for new onset asthma."

And they add: "Our findings may also provide a possible explanation for the increased prevalence of respiratory symptoms during the recent economic crisis in the UK."

Provided by British Medical Journal

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