

Research leads to call for lung health screening at top football clubs

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Credit: University of Kent

New research from the University has discovered that nearly three in 10 elite footballers at top clubs in England have undetected lung and airway problems that could impair their on-field performance.

The findings of this study will be presented at a British Thoracic Society meeting on 8 December by lead researcher Anna Jackson, who will also call for all top football clubs to implement a lung health screening programme to help identify those with airway problems and treat them appropriately.

The research, which was conducted with colleagues at London's Royal Brompton Hospital, assessed the [airway](#) health and impact of treatment in 97 elite male footballers undergoing pre-season fitness and medical screening. It discovered that high rates of previously undiagnosed exercise-induced asthma (EIA) existed among those tested.

Footballers are traditionally screened for potential heart problems using rigorous medical tests but Ms Jackson and colleagues recommend that this should also be the case for lung and breathing issues. Not only would it improve the lung health of players, it also has the potential to increase the players' performance.

They also suggest that clubs need to implement a more rigorous [lung health](#) screening programme pre-season using core medical tests and to move beyond looking ad-hoc at possible symptoms, as sometimes these may not always be obvious – or even 'written off' as poor fitness or short term "coughs and colds."

It is often the case that in some clubs footballers who are very short of breath or who cough a lot after training may be deemed as not being "fit enough," when in fact they may have [problems](#) with their airways that need to be treated.

Provided by University of Kent

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