

Walkable neighborhoods might lower kids' asthma risk

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(HealthDay)—Children may be more likely to develop asthma if they

live in neighborhoods where it's difficult to get around on foot, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 326,000 children in Toronto who were born between 1997 and 2003, and followed them until the ages of 8 through 15.

Twenty-one percent of the children developed asthma, and low [walkability](#) in a child's neighborhood was associated with an increased risk of asthma, the findings showed.

"We found that children living in neighborhoods with low walkability were more likely to develop asthma and to continue to have asthma during later childhood," said study author Dr. Elinor Simons. She's a pediatric allergist at the University of Manitoba and Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba.

"These findings show a relationship between lack of day-to-day physical activity, or sedentary lifestyle, and development of new and ongoing asthma in Toronto children," she explained in a news release from the American Thoracic Society.

But the study did not prove that a lack of walking caused [asthma risk](#) to rise.

Previous research has examined neighborhood walkability and chronic diseases such as diabetes in adults, but this study is believed to be the first to look at walkability and [childhood asthma](#).

"Other large cities may have neighborhood walkability patterns that are similar to Toronto's, and may see similar associations with childhood [asthma](#)," the study authors noted.

The researchers suggested that walkability can be improved "by greater placement of services—such as grocery stores—within residential [neighborhoods](#), and adding pedestrian paths between roads to improve street connectivity."

Simons added that "it is important to note that this study measured physical characteristics and did not look at social characteristics, such as neighborhood crime and safety, or cultural reasons for walking rather than using another means of transportation. These characteristics also need to be studied and taken into account."

The study findings were published June 1 in the *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*.

More information: The American Lung Association has more on [asthma in children](#).

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