

Children with asthma at risk for anxiety

April 5 2023



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Children diagnosed with asthma were at significantly increased risk of developing anxiety, a University of Queensland study has found.

Researchers from the UQ School of Public Health analyzed 9,369 reports using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), which has followed the development and well-being of 10,000 [children](#) since 2004.

Lead author and Ph.D. candidate, Diana Garcia Sanchez said the findings revealed 4-year-olds with [asthma](#) were more likely to develop [anxiety](#) between the ages of 6 and 15 years, compared to non-asthmatic children. The study is published in the journal *Pediatric Allergy and Immunology*.

"We found there was an 87% increased risk overall for children with asthma," Ms. Garcia Sanchez said.

"We also found girls with asthma experienced more anxiety than boys during adolescence."

Around one in five Australian children live with the respiratory condition characterized by chronic inflammation of the airways, causing episodes of wheezing and shortness of breath.

Researchers don't believe medication used to treat the disease is responsible for the increased risk of anxiety.

"The [asthmatic children](#) in the study who were unmedicated developed anxiety at a higher rate than those who were medicated for asthma," Ms. Garcia Sanchez said.

"The children who were not taking asthma medication were 9% more likely to develop anxiety than their medicated counterparts."

"Other factors like additional burden to manage the disease or could be some linkage between immune system dysfunction/inflammation and [mental health](#) in some of the new models.

"Other factors could explain the link between asthma and anxiety, and [health professionals](#) and parents should regularly monitor the mental health of children and provide psychological support where appropriate.

"This may help identify those most at risk of developing anxiety earlier and improve management of the condition," Ms. Garcia Sanchez said.

More information: Diana Garcia-Sanchez et al, Asthma and anxiety development in Australian children and adolescents, *Pediatric Allergy and Immunology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/pai.13941](https://doi.org/10.1111/pai.13941)

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Children with asthma at risk for anxiety (2023, April 5) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-04-children-asthma-anxiety.html>

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