

Gas stoves and damp houses increase Aussie asthma rates

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Credit: University of Queensland

University of Queensland researchers have found that childhood asthma in Australia is associated with gas stoves and damp houses.

Dr. Luke Knibbs, from the Centre for Air Pollution, Energy and Health Research and UQ's School of Public Health, led research that aimed to find the connection between childhood [asthma](#) and two common indoor exposures in homes.

"We found that 12 per cent of childhood asthma is attributable to exposure to gas stoves used for cooking, and eight per cent is linked to household dampness," Dr. Knibbs said.

"Cooking with gas releases chemicals such as nitrogen dioxide and formaldehyde, which causes inflammation in the airways and exacerbates asthma.

"With 38 per cent of Australian homes using natural gas for stovetop cooking, this is a common problem.

"Using high-efficiency range-hoods could reduce the amount of [childhood asthma](#) associated with

[gas stoves](#) from 12 per cent to just three per cent.

"The preferred option is to make sure the range-hood is vented outdoors, rather than a hood that recirculates the air.

"Even in homes without a range-hood, opening windows during and after cooking can help reduce exposure."

The study identified the presence of dampness in 26 per cent of Australian homes.

"Damp homes are quite common around Australia, and living in a damp home can adversely affect children's lungs," Dr. Knibbs said.

"Simple ways to reduce dampness include better ventilating houses with fresh air (using open windows when conditions allow), using room dehumidifiers, and limiting use of clothes dryers indoors.

"Most parents of children with asthma are aware of ways to minimise exposure to dust mites, pollen and animal hair through vacuuming and replacing carpets with hard flooring, but other indoor exposures are not as well recognised.

"The prevalence of asthma in Australia is among the highest in the world, and it's a leading cause of illness in children.

"A coordinated national strategy is needed to increase awareness of indoor environmental exposures, such as gas stove emissions and dampness, and the different ways people can reduce [exposure](#) in the home.

More information: Luke D Knibbs et al. , *The Medical Journal of Australia* (2018). [DOI: 10.5694/mja17.00469](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja17.00469)

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