

## Rhinovirus infection in childhood increases asthma odds 10-fold

Infants who experience viral respiratory illnesses with wheezing are 10 times as likely to develop asthma later.

Using new molecular techniques to identify different viruses, researchers have pinpointed the biggest culprit: rhinovirus (RV) in this case.

'We have found that rhinovirus, the most common cause of colds, contributes a disproportionate amount towards future asthma development in comparison to other viruses that also cause childhood wheezing,' principal investigator Robert F. Lemanske Jr said.

Lemanske Jr heads the division of paediatric allergy, immunology and rheumatology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

From November 1998 to May 2000, researchers recruited nearly 300 newborns at high risk for asthma (with one or both parents having had allergies or asthma) for the Childhood Origins of Asthma (COAST) study. The children were followed from birth to six years and evaluated for the presence of specific viruses during wheezing illnesses.

At six years, 28 percent of the kids had asthma and those who had wheezed with rhinovirus were disproportionately among them. Children who wheezed with RV during the first year of life were nearly three times as likely to have asthma at age six, said a Wisconsin School of Medicine press release.

The older the children were, the greater the effect. Children who had wheezed with RV in their second year of life were more than six times as likely to have asthma. Wheezing with RV at three increased asthma odds by more than 30-fold.

'Indeed, nearly 90 percent of the children wheezing with RV during year three subsequently developed asthma at age six,' wrote Daniel J. Jackson, allergy and immunology fellow at Wisconsin and co-author of the study.

The results appeared in the October issue of the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

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