

Parent's mental health can affect kids' asthma care

November 3 2022, by Cara Murez



When a parent is depressed, their child's asthma care may suffer. Now,

research suggests that getting a child's asthma under control may include assessing a parents' mental health.

Researchers at University of Texas Southwestern found that treating a parent's depression could sometimes improve symptom control in asthmatic children.

About 8% of American children have [asthma](#). Symptoms include shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing due to inflammation of the lungs and airways.

"Moreover, asthma is a medical illness that is sensitive to a patient's mood as well as medication adherence," said [Dr. E. Sherwood Brown](#), a professor of psychiatry.

Stress and depression in children who have asthma can cause airway constriction and worsen symptoms. Then, this poor asthma control can exacerbate a child's depression. High rates of depression among [caregivers](#) may also put stress on kids, worsening their [depressive symptoms](#) and asthma control, the researchers noted.

To study the issue, the investigators followed caregivers with [major depressive disorder](#) and their children with persistent asthma for one year.

They found that improvement in caregiver depression was associated with fewer asthma attacks and better asthma control for children.

This improvement in asthma control occurred, in part, through reduction in the children's depressive symptom severity.

Health care providers may need to think more broadly when treating patients, Brown said in a university news release.

"It might be useful to screen for depression both in children with asthma and their caregivers," Brown said. "Identifying depression in the caregiver and providing [effective treatment](#) might help improve asthma control in the child."

Lung disorder experts often see depression in their higher-risk asthma patients, said [Dr. Andrew Gelfand](#), a UT Southwestern pulmonologist who was not involved in the study. These cases will lead to bringing in psychiatrists or increasing medications if the patient's asthma symptoms aren't improving.

"This study defines another opportunity to screen for and improve [patient care](#)," said Gelfand. "It's not just the patient's mental health that can improve their outcomes; screening their parents for depression can also be a critical step in improving the outcomes of our poorly controlled asthmatics."

About 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.

The findings were published recently in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [asthma](#).

E. Sherwood Brown et al, The Impact of Caregiver Depression on Child Asthma Outcomes: Pathways and Mechanisms, *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaip.2022.09.016](#)

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