

Allergists less likely to check Black children for eczema

February 14 2023, by Cara Murez



Doctors have dubbed kids' progression from eczema to asthma the

"atopic march," and they know more about how it affects white children than their Black counterparts.

Research scheduled for presentation at an upcoming meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) sheds new light on [racial disparities](#).

The atopic march typically begins early in life with [atopic dermatitis](#) (eczema) and can eventually progress to asthma, as well as environmental and food allergies.

In the new study, the researchers found that while Black children are more likely to develop asthma, they're less likely than white children to be evaluated for eczema by an allergist.

"We already know that Black children have higher rates of asthma," said study author Dr. Ellen Stephen, an allergy/immunology fellow at Rush University Medical Center, in Chicago. "But the atopic march has just not been studied in Black children as widely as it has in white children."

Her team reviewed medical charts of nearly 1,000 children, aged 18 and under, who were diagnosed with eczema at a single medical center.

In all, 728 Black children and 246 white children had an [eczema](#) diagnosis. Of those, 31% of Black children were likely to have an asthma diagnosis, compared to 10% of white children.

In all, nearly 47% of Black children and 69% of [white children](#) were evaluated by an allergist. Black children were also significantly less likely to have been tested for environmental allergens, the investigators found.

"Asthma is a common, potentially life-threatening condition affecting

the children in our country, and allergist evaluation and environmental allergy testing can be essential to optimizing control of this disease," Stephen said in an academy news release.

"To minimize existing [health care disparities](#), more research must be done to help us understand what factors underlie the observed differences in the diagnosis and management of atopic diseases, so that we can overcome existing barriers to providing equitable [asthma](#) care," she added.

The findings are scheduled for presentation at an AAAAI meeting on Feb. 25 in San Antonio. Research presented at medical meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has more about [eczema](#).

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