

Asthmatics working in dusty environments risk a trip to the hospital

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Working in farming or the wood industry while suffering from asthma is not a good combination. This is because it increases the risk of being hospitalized again with asthma. This is shown by a new study from Aarhus University.

Farmers and people who process wood should preferably not suffer from asthma. If they do, they are even more vulnerable while at work. For the first time, a new study from Aarhus University has examined whether working in farming and the wood industry—in occupations with dust exposure—increases the risk of renewed contact with the hospital system if the person has asthma or the lung disease COPD.

This is clearly the case for asthma, while it is uncertain whether the same is true for COPD, explains Vivi Schlünssen, who is one of the researchers behind the study. The risk of renewed contact with a hospital is more than doubled for people with asthma and is most marked for people working in farming, where the risk is more than tripled.

In the study, the researchers examined the correlation between readmission for asthma and dust exposure for 769 asthmatics working in farming or the [wood](#) industry in the years 1997-2007.

More readmissions

There were a total of 94 readmissions (4.9 per 100 person-years) for asthma among those who were exposed, while there were only 24 (1.3 per 100 person-years) among those who were not exposed. Hospitalization could be either admittance to a hospital ward or a visit to a [hospital](#) outpatient clinic.

The results have been published in the [scientific journal](#) *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*.

According to Vivi Schlünssen, the study should be followed by studies stretching over a longer period of time and with information about the severity of the diseases, as the risk of hospitalization will depend on the severity of the asthma and COPD.

"The results of the study confirm previous studies: That asthmatics more often report that they cannot control their asthma if they work in industries with high dust exposure, compared to asthmatics who do not work in dusty environments. And work in dust is associated with a poorer prognosis for people with [asthma](#)," explains the researcher.

More information: Anne Vested et al. Dust exposure and the impact on hospital readmission of farming and wood industry workers for asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.5271/sjweh.3926](https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3926)

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