Early-Life Asthma May Raise the Risk for Obesity in Kids

January 26, 2017

Asthma and obesity are two of the most common health issues for children in the United States—asthma affects an estimated 10 percent of American kids, and obesity affects almost 17 percent of those in the pediatric population. Now, recent findings published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care show a possible link between the two conditions, Medical News Today reports.

For the study, a team of scientists at University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine examined medical data on 2,171 nonobese children ages 5 to 8 during a 10-year period. Researchers conducted the review as part of the Southern California Children's Health Study (CHS), a large-scale, long-term evaluation of the effects of air pollution on the respiratory and metabolic health of children. Later, the scientists also studied an independent sample of 2,684 additional CHS children with an average age between 9.7 and 17.8 years.

At the beginning of the study, more than 18 percent of the children were overweight, and over 13 percent of them had been diagnosed with asthma. During the study's follow-up period, 15.8 percent of these children developed obesity, defined by researchers as having a body mass index, or BMI, at or above the 85th percentile. (This means that a child's weight was at or greater than that of 85 percent of other children of the same age and sex.)

After statistical adjustments for socio-demographic variables, such as age, race and ethnicity, physical activity and other factors, researchers found that nonobese children who suffered from asthma were 51 percent more likely to become obese during the follow-up than those who weren't affected by the condition. The findings also showed that the use of asthma medications, such as inhalers, significantly reduced these kids' risk for obesity.

"Early diagnosis and treatment of asthma may help prevent the childhood obesity epidemic," wrote senior study author Frank Gilliland, MD, PhD, a professor of preventive medicine at USC. According to Gilliland, "Part of the problem may be a vicious cycle where asthma and obesity negatively affect each other."

Still, because much of the study relied on information reported by children's parents, much more research must be done in order to prove a direct link between obesity and asthma.

Click here to learn more about how eating certain foods can negatively affect people living with asthma.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/earlylife-asthma-may-raise-risk-obesity-kids