

Racism a factor in asthma control for young African-American children

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A new article in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) shows an association between African American parents/guardians who have experienced the chronic stress associated with exposure to racism and poor asthma control in their young children.

"The relationship between [adverse childhood experiences](#) (ACEs)/chronic stressors and [asthma](#) risk has been described in adult and some pediatric populations," says allergist Bridgette L. Jones, MD, MS, ACAAI member and lead author of the study. "A recent policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics examined how racism can negatively impact the development of infants, children and teens. We wanted to focus on asthma because we know exposure to chronic/toxic stress affects the pathways that are relevant to asthma control. What hasn't been examined is the impact of these experiences in [early childhood](#) where interventions to address the exposures may be more effective."

Thirty-one parents/guardians completed stress questionnaires that asked about their experiences with racism. The questionnaires also asked about their child's asthma control. The children of parents/guardians that rated high negative scores in association with experiences of racism had decreased asthma control. In other words, increased experiences of racism identified as stressful by parents were associated with lower asthma control in the child. Forty-seven percent of the children had previously required hospitalization for asthma and 27 percent had required intensive care support during an asthma hospitalization.

"ACEs and toxic/chronic stressors such as emotional/physical/[sexual abuse](#), housing instability, financial stress and experiencing racial discrimination are psychosocial factors that are associated with poor asthma control in children

and adults," says Dr. Jones. "Knowing that's true for older children, it's important to identify stressors in young children that are potentially able to be modified. That could possibly allow for [early intervention](#) to improve health-related outcomes in the long term."

If asthma symptoms are negatively affecting your child, find an allergist near you who can help create a personal plan to help them lead the life they want to live. The ACAAI allergist locator can help you find an allergist in your area.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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