

# Study: Bullied children more likely to have asthma

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Children with asthma are vulnerable to being bullied, but there is little research on whether being bullied might be associated with greater prevalence of asthma.

In a study published in *The Annals of Epidemiology*, CUNY SPH doctoral alumna Sharon Joseph, Distinguished Professor Luisa N. Borrell, and colleagues examined the association of being bullied within the past year with the prevalence of lifetime asthma. Using nationally representative data on children ages six to 17 years from the 2018 National Survey of Children's Health, they also tested interactions of bullying with sex and selected socioeconomic indicators.

In adjusted analyses, the researchers found that children who experience bullying have a significantly greater probability of having asthma. The probability of childhood asthma increased with the frequency of bullying. The association did not differ with the sex of the child or selected socioeconomic indicators.

"As a stress experience, bullying may trigger a

physiologic reaction that may trigger asthma onset," Joseph explains. "For instance, studies have shown that exposure to stress can cause increased inflammation and [airway obstruction](#) leading to episodes of cough and wheeze- two cardinal diagnostic symptoms of asthma."

"Studies such as this one provide important information on the management of asthma to providers in [primary care](#) pediatric clinics and school health services as well as school administrators and educators when dealing with children with [asthma](#) who experience bullying, a non-traditional risk factor," Borrell says.

**More information:** Sharon P. Joseph et al, Bullying and lifetime asthma among children and adolescents in the United States, *Annals of Epidemiology* (2022). DOI: [10.1016/j.annepidem.2022.02.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2022.02.001)

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