



Being depressed may worsen asthma

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Stress and depression may cause asthma in young people to worsen, U.S. researchers say.

The study, published in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, finds depressed children with asthma are more likely to exhibit a dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system along with increased airway compromise.

The study led by Dr. Bruce Miller and Beatrice Wood, both of the University of Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in New York involved 90 children with asthma, ages 7-17.

Forty-five asthmatic children with symptoms of depression were compared with 45 asthmatic children without symptoms of depression. Both groups viewed scary, very sad and happy scenes from the movie "E.T.: The Extraterrestrial."

The researchers monitored heart and respiratory function. They also assessed airway function before the movie, after the death scene and after the movie.

"The depressed group consistently showed greater parasympathetic activation along with decreased sympathetic activation in response to the emotional provocations -- a pattern that would have a detrimental effect on the airways," Miller said in a statement.

"In contrast, the group without symptoms of depression showed consistent activation of the sympathetic pathway, which would support better airway function under stress."

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