

[341] The frequency of workplace exacerbation of asthma

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Background: The worsening of asthma due to workplace conditions can have serious consequences, but has been investigated infrequently.

Objective: To determine how often adults with asthma experienced workplace exacerbation of their illness.

Methods: Researchers reviewed records of members of a health maintenance organization to identify adults (18-44 yrs of age) with asthma. Participants completed a telephone questionnaire, and a work-related symptom score was based on responses to selected questions. Blinded to these symptom scores, two researchers independently reviewed self-reported work histories and assigned exposure ratings. Participants with sufficient evidence for both work-related symptoms and exposure were classified as having workplace exacerbation of asthma (WEA).

Results: Of the 978 people contacted, 598 (61%) completed the questionnaire. 557 (93% of 598) were working and 136 (23% of 598) fulfilled the criteria for WEA. Those with WEA were similar to those without WEA regarding age, race, education, income, smoking, and severity of asthma. Those with WEA were more likely to be male and reported they were bothered by asthma symptoms on more of the past 7 days.

Conclusions: Workplace exacerbation of asthma is common, occurring in over one-fifth of adults with asthma.

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Session Info: Discussion: Occupational asthma: epidemiology and diagnostics

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Henneberger PK, Derk SJ, Sama SR, Boylstein RJ, Preusse PA, Roseillo RA, Milton DK. The frequency of workplace exacerbation of asthma. Eur Resp J 2005;26(Suppl 49):34s.

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