

Subject: newsrel -- Traffic pollution linked to new cases of asthma

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Smog shown to have clear link to inducing asthma.

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Traffic pollution linked to new cases of asthma

New findings substantiate efforts to reduce smog

SACRAMENTO: Today the California Air Resources Board heard the results of a study that found childhood asthma rates could increase as much as 30 percent with the exposure to higher levels of traffic-related air pollution.

The eight-year study followed 217 non-asthmatic children from a wide area of Southern California. Home air monitors allowed scientists to compare the children's exposure to air pollution and newly diagnosed cases of asthma. It was found that higher amounts of nitrogen dioxide, a constituent of smog, are associated with the development of childhood asthma.

"California's prosperity depends on the choices we make to protect our children," said ARB Chairman Mary D. Nichols. "This study underlines the need for clean air, giving us the benefits of a fully healthy population."

Published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives, the study is the latest to come from the Southern California Children's Health Study, a project pioneered by the Air Resources Board in the early 1990s. This, the most extensive investigation into air pollution's impact on the young, has provided data that resulted in over 100 peer-reviewed articles with several ground breaking results.

One of these studies found that children exercising on days with high ozone concentrations also had an increased likelihood of developing asthma.

"Good air quality is fundamental to good health," added Nichols.

Recent studies have shown that the reduction of air pollution is also economically beneficial. It diminishes the costs associated with lost work and school days, medications to address illnesses, hospital visits and smog-related premature deaths."

The Air Resources Board is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. ARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.

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