

Which comes first: exercise-induced asthma or obesity? Concordia researchers ask the classic question

Many Canadians suffer from health concerns regarding their weight, especially the growing concerns around obesity. New research now shows that obesity can contribute majorly to other illnesses, with asthma being just one on a list of many.

A new Canadian study looks into what effects obesity can have on asthma, specifically focusing on exercise-induced asthma. Exercise-induced asthma, commonly known as EIA, is a specific type of asthma that induces an asthma attack specifically when exercising. It can happen to people who experience asthma on a regular basis, as well as those who don't. EIA is generally triggered because of the different ways we breathe when exercising and when at rest. When exercising, we breathe through our mouth—which causes cold, dry air to hit our lungs, thus triggering the attack.

The study—a collaborative effort between Concordia University, Université du Québec à Montréal and Hôpital du Sacre-Coeur de Montréal—examines the high rate of people with asthma who have EIA and how, because of obesity, these numbers are rising.

The study surveyed a variety of participants ranging from normal-weight to obese, as well as people with asthma ranging from mild to severe and persistent. To ensure accuracy in the study the researchers also included variables such as current exercise routine, and exposure to animals and pollen.

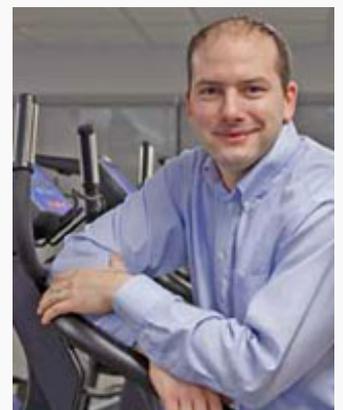
Concordia professor Simon Bacon, the lead author of the study, states that the obese participants of their study were much more likely to have EIA than the normal-weight participants. According to Bacon, the research shows “that for every one-point increase in body mass index score was associated with a 9 percent increase in the probability of reporting exercise-induced asthma.”

Exercise-induced asthma can create a vicious cycle; as the weight gain increases, it becomes more difficult to exercise (due to EIA), but this is when exercise becomes even more necessary. Professor Bacon stresses that the condition will only get worse if the victims fall into a “sedentary lifestyle.” The researchers advise referring to weight management specialties if EIA and obesity is a problem for you.

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Lead author Simon Bacon. (Photo Credit: Concordia University)