

Media Release

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Identifying allergic triggers of asthma

The prevalence of asthma in Australia has doubled over the ten years between 1982 and 1992. One in four children, one in seven adolescents and one in ten adults have asthma, giving Australia the second highest prevalence of asthma in the world.

Early childhood asthma is often associated with sensitivity to environmental allergens. Around 40% of Australians have allergies and more than 80% of people with asthma have allergies.

Dr Christopher Luttrell of the General Practitioners Asthma Group says that allergy triggering is possible in all patients with asthma. “The most important weapon in the diagnosis is having knowledge of the pattern of asthma, recognition that allergic reaction might play a part in both the development and exacerbation of asthma, and attentive listening to the patient or their parents for what they feel may be triggering the problem,” said Dr Luttrell.

“If there is an allergic trigger to asthma, health providers should discuss management options with their patient,” he continued.

To reduce the risk of allergy and asthma development, Dr Luttrell urges parents to avoid exposure of unborn children and infants to tobacco smoke. Mothers with existing allergies or asthma should exclusively breastfeed until 4-6 months of age when low allergenic foods should be gradually introduced to the infant’s diet.

Exposure to environmental allergens such as the house dust mite should also be avoided.

Dr Luttrell will present a paper on allergies and asthma at the 7th National Rural Health Conference, which will be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart from March 1-4. Dr Luttrell will speak at 11:40am on Sunday March 2 in the Concert Hall.

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