

Household cleaning sprays 'could be contributing to rise in cases of asthma'

The use of household cleaning sprays could be contributing to a rise in cases of asthma, a leading expert has warned.

By [Kate Devlin](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/kate-devlin/) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/kate-devlin/), Medical Correspondent

Published: 7:30AM BST 07 Jun 2010

Studies suggest that some products can exacerbate existing conditions and even trigger breathing problems in people who have never previously suffered from the illness.

If proven, the link could make some cases of the disease preventable, according to Dr Jan-Paul Zock, an expert in occupational asthma.



Inhaling chemicals found in many household cleaners, more than once a week was linked to 20 per cent rise in cases of asthma or wheezing Photo: ALAMY

Related Articles

Drug for severely asthmatic children 'available in Scotland but not England' (/health/healthnews/7790738/Drug-for-severely-asthmatic-children-available-in-Scotland-but-not-England.html)

Glaxo asthma drug Advair's patent invalid, rules German court (/finance/newsbysector/pharmaceuticalsandchemicals/7746005/Glaxo-asthma-drug-Advairs-patent-invalid-rules-German-court.html)

Most people 'would not help a child having an asthma attack' (/health/children_shealth/7674300/Most-people-would-not-help-a-child-having-an-asthma-attack.html)

Eczema cases rise 40 per cent in four years (/health/healthnews/5038272/Eczema-cases-rise-40-per-cent-in-four-years.html)

Repossessions to reach 75,000 in 2009 as half a million fall into arrears (/finance/economics/houseprices/3831321/Repossessions-to-reach-75000-in-2009-as-half-a-million-fall-into-arrears.html)

Swine flu: routine operations must be put on hold, say leading doctors (/health/swine-flu/5804496/Swine-flu-routine-operations-must-be-put-on-hold-say-leading-doctors.html)

Around five million people in Britain suffer from asthma.

Rates of the condition are thought to have doubled in the two decades to the mid 1990s, but plateaued since then.

A range of studies have shown a link between asthma and exposure to some cleaning products, Dr Zock, from the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology in Barcelona, said.

Speaking at an international asthma conference in London, he said: "The number of people at risk is very large.

"Not only those who have cleaning jobs or whose work involves cleaning are at risk, but we also need to consider the

ubiquitous use of cleaning products at home.”

Research has shown that janitors, cleaners, housekeepers and nurses are at an increased risk of developing asthma.

Inhaling chemicals found in many household cleaners, including bleach, ammonia, solvents and stain removers more than once a week was linked to 20 per cent rise in cases of asthma or wheezing.

However, researchers do not know how the chemicals affect the lungs and what can cause them to trigger asthma.

Dr Zock called for more research into how exposure to specific chemicals over time can affect the chances of developing the condition.

Scientists should also work to identify those most likely to develop the disease following prolonged exposure.

“Our research shows that cleaning-related asthma is an important public health issue and it is potentially preventable,” said Dr Zock, who was speaking at the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, being held this week at the Excel centre in London.

Around 2,000 Britons a year die from asthma, and the condition costs more than £2 billion a year in NHS treatment and sickness absences.

It is extremely common in children.

An estimated 1.5 million children have asthma, although most of them will grow out of the condition as they get older.

Dr Elaine Vickers, from Asthma UK, says: 'There is substantial evidence linking asthma to the use of cleaning sprays, chlorine bleach and disinfectants at work, although further research is needed to understand the processes involved and how many people are at risk.

“Some people with asthma also tell us they experience symptoms like wheezing or coughing when using cleaning products in the home, so it's important that they open windows when they clean, use products sparingly and choose natural alternatives where possible.

'If anyone is concerned about developing asthma as a result of using cleaning products at work or home, we recommend they speak to their doctor.’

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2010