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PROXIMITY TO FREEWAY TRAFFIC
LINKED TO ASTHMA IN KIDS

An analysis of many studies, published in the journal *Allergy*, found a significant association between traffic-related air pollution and asthma. The association was seen as early as the age of 1 and increased as the child became older. The rise in asthma as kids get older seems to be related both to structural changes that pollution creates in the lungs and also to the extent of time that older children spend outside compared to younger children.

One other important aspect of asthma is that it can be exacerbated by stress. Noise pollution and the danger of cars in close proximity may worsen asthma symptoms in children because they can create a more stressful environment. This is an important factor if your child already has asthma.

A recent study in Minnesota evaluated the number of asthma cases in the emergency room, in the hospital and in a clinical setting. The researchers then looked at the proximity of people to a major source of traffic. After taking poverty out of the equation, which is in itself a risk factor for asthma, the researchers found that, as traffic density increased, so did the number of asthma exacerbations, or worsening of asthma symptoms. In this study, for every 10 percent increase in traffic density, there was a 15 percent increase in asthma-related visits to the emergency room, hospital or outpatient clinic.

Clearly, if you have a child with asthma, moving him or her away from traffic would indeed reduce the chance of a severe asthma attack.

(By Robert Ashley, M.D.
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