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Title: The prevalence of asthma symptoms in middle aged Australian adults

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Body: Introduction: ISAAC and the European Community Respiratory Health Survey (ECRHS) have shown that the prevalence of asthma in children and young adults is higher in Australia than many other Western countries. Aim: To describe changes in respiratory symptom prevalence in adults as they age. Methods: We followed up a cohort of young adults from South Eastern Melbourne initially recruited for ECRHS in 1992. A validated postal questionnaire was sent to 726 surviving participants. After 1 month, non-respondents were sent a second survey. The survey is still on going. Results: Of the first 166 questionnaires received to date, 73 (44%) were from males and the mean (SD) age was 55 (5.7) years. The prevalences (95%CI) of respiratory symptoms and diseases are:

Wheezing in the last 12 months	23.5%	17.0-30.0%
Breathless with wheezing	12.0%	7.1-16.9%
Wheezing without a cold	13.9%	8.6-19.1%
Woken with chest tightness in the last 12 months	15.7%	10.0-21.3%
Woken with shortness of breath (SOB) in the last 12 months	9.6%	4.9-14.3%
Woken with cough in the last 12 months	35.5%	28.3-42.8%
Asthma attack in the last 12 months	10.8%	5.9-15.7%
Medications for asthma	13.3%	8.0-18.5%
Nasal allergies including hayfever	43.4%	35.7-51.0%
SOB at rest in the last 12 months	10.8%	6.1-15.5%
SOB after strenuous activity in the last 12 months	22.9%	16.4-29.4%

Ever had asthma	29.5%	22.5-36.6%
Cough on most days for 3 months a year	11.4%	6.5-16.3%
Phlegm for 3 months a year (chronic bronchitis)	6.6%	2.9-10.4%

Conclusions: The prevalences of respiratory symptoms and asthma are broadly consistent with previous surveys of this age group. Incidence will be estimated when non-respondents are traced and the response rate improves. Funding: NHMRC of Australia.