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Title: Prevalence and severity of asthma, rhinitis and eczema in Chinese school children

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Body: The prevalence of asthma has been increasing in the industrialised world over the past few decades. We studied 10824 Chinese school children (5305 boys and 5519 girls) from Shijiazhuang city in Hebei Province in China. We used ISAAC questionnaire (the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood). This major project is a baseline of a longitudinal study looking at changes in the prevalence rates of asthma, rhinitis and eczema in these children and risk factors of asthma and allergies in Chinese children including high level of air pollution. The prevalence rates were higher in boys compared to girls (wheeze ever 6.6 vs 4.9; exercise-induced wheeze 3.4 vs 3.2; asthma ever 1.5 vs 0.8; ever rhinitis 15.4 vs 12.2; current rhinitis 11.1 vs 8.3; hay fever ever 4.8 vs 3.8; chronic rash ever 2.7 vs 2.2; and eczema ever 12.4 vs 10.7). The prevalence rates were lower than Chinese children living in Hong Kong (wheeze ever 5.7 vs 13.0; asthma ever 1.1 vs 8.6; current wheeze 1.9 vs 6.6; current rhinoconjunctivitis 2.4 vs 16.2; and current flexural eczema 0.9 vs 4.3). These differences may be due to different early life experience and exposure including dietary and aeroallergens exposure. The present study will help to add new knowledge related to the longitudinal effects of air pollution and allergies in Chinese children.