



# Journal of Medical Sciences

ISSN 1682-4474

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## Nasal Congestion Can Mean Severe Asthma

***Nasal congestion can be a sign of severe asthma, which means that healthcare professionals should be extra vigilant when it comes to nasal complaints. Furthermore, more severe asthma appears to be more common than previously thought, reveals a study from the Sahlgrenska Academy's Krefting Research Centre.***

Published in the online scientific journal *Respiratory Research*, the population study included 30,000 randomly selected participants from the west of Sweden and asked questions about different aspects of health.

"This is the first time that the prevalence of severe asthma has been estimated in a population study, documenting that approximately 2% of the population in the West Sweden is showing signs of severe asthma," says Jan Lötval, one of the authors of the study and Professor at the Sahlgrenska Academy's Krefting Research Centre. "This argues that more severe forms of asthma are far more common than previously believed, and that healthcare professionals should pay extra attention to patients with such symptoms.

"We also found that more pronounced nasal symptoms, such as chronic rhinosinusitis, in other words nasal congestion and a runny nose for a long period of time, can be linked to more severe asthma."

Jan Lötval suggests that patients who report nasal complaints, perhaps together with minor symptoms from the lower respiratory tract, such as wheezing, shortness of breath during physical effort, and night-time awakings because of breathing problems -- should be investigated for asthma.

"These findings suggest that some parts of the immune system that are activated in connection with chronic nasal problems might be linked to severe asthma, and this insight could lead to new forms of treatment in the long run," says Lötval. "Effective treatment for troublesome nasal and sinus complaints could, in theory, reduce the risk of severe asthma, though this is something that needs further research."

These results increase our understanding of the factors that play a role in severe asthma, and could help clinical researchers to understand which mechanisms lead to more severe asthma. At the same time, Lötval believes that healthcare professionals should be aware of the possibility of severe asthma in patients showing signs of nasal problems, such as congestion, polyps and a poor sense of smell.

Jan Lotvall, Linda Ekerljung, Bo Lundback. Multi-symptom asthma is closely related to nasal blockage, rhinorrhea and symptoms of chronic rhinosinusitis - evidence from the West Sweden Asthma Study. *Respiratory Research*, 2010; 11 (1): 163 DOI: 10.1186/1465-9921-11-163