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## **Study Links Freeways to Asthma Risk**

**USC research adds to evidence that air pollution can cause respiratory problems.**

By Deborah Schoch

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September 21, 2005

The closer that children live to Southern California freeways, the greater their risk of being diagnosed with asthma, USC researchers have found in a study that bolsters growing evidence that air pollution can cause asthma.

Children who lived a quarter mile from a freeway, for example, had an 89% higher risk of asthma than children living about a mile from a freeway, according to the new research.

Even in areas such as Santa Maria, with generally good air quality, the researchers found that the risk of asthma increased for children who lived near freeways.

Separately, a different team of University of Southern California researchers has concluded that the chronic health effects of smog among adults are two to three times greater than earlier research showed. The team pinpointed a link between the tiny particles contained in air pollution and increased deaths from heart disease.

Articles on the two studies, conducted in Southern California, appear in the November issue of the journal *Epidemiology*.

USC released the findings Tuesday.

The freeway article is part of an ongoing landmark study of how air pollution affects children's respiratory health. That study, which began in 1993, produced findings last fall that showed smog can permanently stunt lung growth in children and lead to lifelong health problems.

Dr. Elisa Nicholas, project director for the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma, called the freeway study significant. "There's increasing evidence demonstrating a link between air pollution and the development of asthma,"

researchers can use to advise individual parents.

"The message is probably more general, in terms of thinking about not planning tracts or schools close to a major freeway," he said. The findings might also be useful for government regulators studying the impacts of air pollution.

"From a regulatory standpoint, it might suggest that we need to look not only at background air quality but also the more local exposures that one might have by living next to a major roadway," Gauderman said.

The study involved children living in the cities of Alpine, Atascadero, Lake Elsinore, Lancaster, Long Beach, Mira Loma, Riverside, San Dimas, Santa Maria and Upland.

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