

Transcription (approximate)

Kids grow out of wheezing

Many parents of children with asthma are concerned that it might be lifelong, but there are only a few studies which have followed children with asthma through to adulthood: one or two in Australia, one in Arizona and one in New Zealand.

The New Zealand study – based in Dunedin – has reported its follow up of all children born over a 12 month period in the early 70s.

By the age of 26, nearly three-quarters of them had wheezed at least once in their lives and half of them more than once. One in four had wheezing as adults, about 50 percent of whom wheezed continuously since childhood while the other half had periods free of asthma.

The predictors of persistent wheezing were having twitchy airways, experiencing the first episode as pre-schoolers and being allergic to house dust mites, the wee beasties that live in carpets, bedding and soft furnishings. Severe asthma also seemed to be a factor.

What the study couldn't say was whether treating children with asthma more effectively reduced the risk of adult disease.

The real message is that a huge proportion of children wheeze sometime in their lives - but for most it's just temporary and doesn't mean they have asthma.