

UW Health: Enrolling expectant mothers, families for studies on childhood asthma and food allergies

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MADISON, Wis. – Researchers at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health are recruiting expectant mothers and families to join two new studies designed to help experts better understand the causes of two of the most common chronic diseases in children: childhood asthma and childhood food allergies. Both studies are funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and led by researchers in the UW Department of Pediatrics' division of allergy, immunology, and rheumatology. Both are birth cohort studies; research studies that follow a group of people born around the same time.

Asthma is a disease of recurrent wheezing that often starts in the first few years of life, suggesting that the disease originates during the prenatal period or first few months of life. The first study, "Childhood asthma and the neonatal environment" or CANOE, seeks to identify causes of childhood asthma by examining how early-life environmental factors may contribute to the disease. The CANOE study will follow mothers and their children starting in the prenatal period through the child's first 3 years of life. Study activities will be conducted over the phone, through email, and/or around scheduled prenatal and pediatrician visits. The activities will occur at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health locations. Previous birth cohort studies have found that the development of childhood asthma is influenced by a family history of allergies and early-life environmental factors such as pollutants, viruses, and bacteria. UW researchers are looking to enroll 125 families in the CANOE study. More information about this study can be found at uwhealth.org/canoe.

Food allergies are on the rise and now affect 5-10% of children, usually beginning in

the first year of life. The second study, called “Systems biology of early allergy” or SUNBEAM, is the first birth cohort study specifically designed to investigate what causes food allergies in children. Researchers are recruiting pregnant mothers, their infants and their infant’s biological father to identify potential causes of food allergies and eczema. The goal of the study is to better understand the origins of food allergy to help improve prevention and treatments. UW researchers are looking to enroll 240 families in the SUNBEAM study, which will include up to 2500 children nationally. More information about this study is available at uwhealth.org/sunbeam.

The studies’ investigators include Dr. Anne Marie Singh, associate professor; Dr. James Gern, professor; and Dr. Dan Jackson, professor, UW School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Pediatrics.