

# Geographic factors can cause allergies, asthma

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Those living near the equator may find themselves sneezing and wheezing more than usual. And the reason may not be due to increasing pollen counts. According to a new study released today, in the February issue of *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), living in locations closest to the equator can put you at increased risk of developing allergy and asthma.

"UV-B rays exposure is higher for people living in areas closer to the equator," said Vicka Oktaria, MPH, lead study author. "This increase in UV-B may be linked to vitamin D, which is thought to modify the immune system. These modifications can lead to an elevated risk of developing allergy and asthma."

Previous studies have shown that latitude can reflect a variation in airborne allergens due to climate, housing and social and cultural differences. This study is one of the first using the individuals latitude location and UV-B exposure to examine the association with allergy and asthma.

"Allergies and asthma are serious diseases that can be life-threatening if not diagnosed and treated properly," said allergist Richard Weber, MD, ACAAI president. "Both conditions can be more than bothersome for people, no matter their geographic location, and can last year-round."

Board-certified allergists are the best-trained health professionals to perform testing and treat both asthma and allergic diseases effectively. According to ACAAI, many people that have an allergy also experience [asthma](#) symptoms. In fact, an estimated 75 to 85 percent of asthmatics have an [allergy](#).

**More information:** If you have symptoms of asthma or allergy, you can locate a free screening in your area by visiting [www.acaai.org/nasp](http://www.acaai.org/nasp) .

Screenings will begin in May and will take place at about 100 locations nationwide throughout the year.

For more information on allergies and asthma, and to locate an allergist, please visit [www.AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org](http://www.AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org) .

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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