

Understanding lung disease in aboriginal Australians

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A new study has confirmed that Aboriginal Australians have low forced vital capacity—or the amount of air that can be forcibly exhaled from the lungs after taking the deepest breath possible. The finding may account for the increased overall impact of lung disease among Aboriginal people in Australia that has previously been attributed to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD, also known as emphysema).

Uncovering the environmental and [socioeconomic factors](#) that might play a role could be useful for developing strategies to prevent chronic [lung disease](#) in Aboriginal Australians and similar populations that are subject to significant social and environmental disadvantage.

"We have known that Aboriginal Australians have smaller lung volumes for some time, but it has also been generally thought that COPD was also more common in Aboriginal Australians. We now know that COPD is not any more common in Aboriginal Australians than in the general population, and we suggest that smaller lung volumes are probably more related to environmental and socioeconomic factors than to genetics alone," said Dr. Nathania Cooksley, lead author of the *Respirology* study.

More information: Cooksley, N. A.J.B., Atkinson, D., Marks, G. B., Toelle, B. G., Reeve, D., Johns, D. P., Abramson, M. J., Burton, D. L., James, A. L., Wood-Baker, R., Walters, E. H., Buist, A. S. and Maguire, G. P. (2015), Prevalence of airflow obstruction and reduced forced vital capacity in an Aboriginal Australian population: The cross-sectional BOLD study. *Respirology*. DOI: [10.1111/resp.12482](https://doi.org/10.1111/resp.12482)

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