

An important Public Health Evaluation is underway under the guidance of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. The Public Health Evaluation is designed to evaluate the potential short and long-term health risks associated with living in the Naples area as a result of inadequate trash collection, uncontrolled open burning of uncollected trash, and widespread dumping of waste, including chemical and other hazardous waste.

Launched in 2008, the Public Health Evaluation involves the collection of air, water, soil and soil gas samples from throughout the region to identify whether there are potential health risks.

For details and background information, visit the website listed at the bottom of this page.

Your Health: Facts for Navy Families in Naples

About: Asthma Epidemiological Study

The U.S. Navy is committed to ensuring our families are safe while serving our country at home or overseas. The following information is provided as part of a wide-ranging effort to understand the health risks of our personnel and families living in Naples, Italy. Currently underway is a comprehensive Public Health Evaluation to assess potential short and long-term health risks associated with living in the Naples area (see sidebar). In line with our commitment to continually share important health information, we encourage you to review the following information.

What is an epidemiological study?

An epidemiological study looks at the distribution of disease, or other health-related conditions and events in human populations, as related to age, sex, occupation, environment, ethnicity, and economic status to identify and alleviate health problems and promote better health. One of the most important distinguishing characteristics of epidemiology is that it deals with groups of people rather than with individual patients.

What is the Asthma Epidemiological Study?

The Asthma Epidemiological Study is one of several studies being conducted by the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) as part of the Naples Public Health Evaluation.

Completed in October 2008, the study was designed to measure changes in asthma diagnoses for residents of U.S. Navy facilities in Naples, which included Capodichino, Support Site and Gaeta. One of the primary reasons for conducting the study was to determine if exposure to smoke from illicit burning of trash increased the severity of asthma in the study population.

The study was designed to answer two fundamental questions:

- Do the frequency and severity of asthma symptoms worsen for Navy active duty personnel and family members while living Naples?

- Are personnel more susceptible to asthma four to six months after arriving in Naples?

For more information on epidemiology, see the fact sheet, "Epidemiology" located on the Naples Community Health Awareness website listed at the bottom of this page.

What did the study find out?

Based on numerous statistical models that were used to investigate possible relationships between changes in asthma severity and arriving in Naples before and after widespread trash burning began in May 2007, the study concluded the following:

- There are no significant associations or trends between exposure to the environment in Naples and asthma severity over the study period.
- Asthma severity does not appear to increase significantly within the first six months of arriving in Naples. This finding was based on a small number of study members. An update of the study will be reported in summer 2009 using additional data collected since June 2008.

Who was part of the study population?

The study linked medical visit records with housing records to identify personnel that were treated for asthma at least once at U.S. Naval Hospital Naples and its branch medical clinics between October 1, 2006, and June 30, 2008. This time period was selected because of the availability of data sources; internal coding of asthma



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severity was required in the medical record starting in October 2006, and available housing records ended on July 1, 2008. The study population included all residents living in U.S. government housing (family, bachelor and leased).

While civilians and other non-military healthcare beneficiaries were eligible for the study, the lack of documentation of their asthma information prior to arrival in Naples limited their full participation.

Medical visits that were outside of the Military Healthcare System (MHS) were not captured by this study. This may include any civilians or other non-military healthcare beneficiaries that were diagnosed prior to reporting to Naples. While some of these individuals may be included in the study, some were excluded due to incomplete records within the MHS.

What information was examined in the study?

Historic diagnoses of asthma in Naples were analyzed to measure any changes in severity of disease over time within the study population and for individual cases.

The Asthma Epidemiological Study examined:

- Records of medical visits related to asthma and upper respiratory illness before and after arriving in Naples;
- Medications prescribed;
- More detailed health information on individuals diagnosed with asthma in Naples; and
- Location of residence through Naval Support Activity Naples Family Housing records.

What happens now since the study is completed?

To further investigate a possible connection between asthma and exposures to smoke from illicit burning of trash, the NMCPHC will continue to collect and analyze the medical visit data for the Naples study population for six

months after the study's completion. The NMCPHC will provide an updated report of findings in summer 2009.

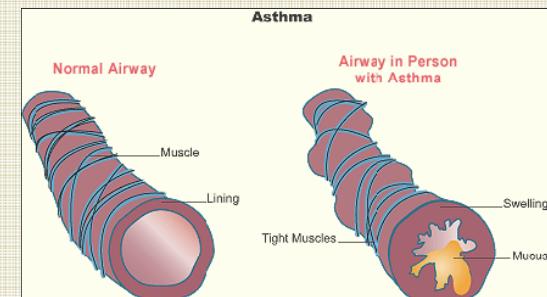
U.S. Naval Hospital Naples will continue to provide current residents with health information on preventing and reducing the severity of upper respiratory system illness. For health-related questions, contact the Environmental Health Information Center (see sidebar for contact information).

Where can I review the study?

The study, along with other information related to the Public Health Evaluation, is posted on the Naples Community Health Awareness website listed at the bottom of this page.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs and is associated with allergies, exposure to very fine particulates and some industrial chemicals. It causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and nighttime or early morning coughing. An asthma attack occurs when the airways in the lungs swell and air flow is constricted, as depicted in the figure below.



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What causes asthma?

In most cases, the causes of asthma are unknown. However, we do know that an asthma attack can be triggered by exposure to things in the environment like air pollution, dust mites, tobacco smoke, pets, allergens and mold.