

What is asthma?

- Doctors define asthma as a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways in the lungs.
- The symptoms are: shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing and wheezing. Asthma is the leading cause of hospital stays for children under age 15.
- Asthma is the leading cause of absenteeism from school in

Canada and the third-leading cause of missing work.

Asthma rates

Asthma rates are rising in Canada and around the world, especially over the last 20 years, but doctors still don't know why. There are a number of theories, including cleaner living environments, processed foods and stress.

Vaccine damage

In 2000, the Manitoba Law Reform Commission released a report that urged the province to compensate children hurt by vaccines.

The report said Manitoba's current compensation scheme is inadequate, and recommended a no-fault scheme similar to what's in place for car accidents and workers injured on

the job. At the time the report was released, two cases of children damaged by vaccines were before the Manitoba courts. One case claimed the child suffered brain damage.



Childhood vaccination, asthma linked

Delaying first shot lessens risk, U of M researcher's study shows

By Jen Skerritt and Alexandra Paul

CHILDREN who have their first routine vaccination delayed by more than four months cut their risk of asthma in half, a University of Manitoba researcher has found.

Anita Kozyrskij, an asthma researcher in the U of M faculty of pharmacy, studied the immunization and health records of 14,000 children born in Manitoba in 1995. Kozyrskij found nearly 14 per cent of the children who received their first shot of the diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine at two months of age developed asthma — compared to only 5.9 per cent of children who were vaccinated more than four months after the scheduled date.

Manitoba recommends vaccinating children at two months, four months, six months and 18 months of age for diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus.

The vaccine can cause an allergic reaction and Kozyrskij said researchers are speculating whether children's immune systems are better able to handle the vaccine's side-effects when they're older. The pertussis vac-

cine used in Manitoba before 1997 caused fever in some children, and some studies have linked fever in early childhood to a greater risk of developing asthma.

The study's findings are going to be published in the *U.S. Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* within the next few weeks.

"We're thinking that maybe if you delay this allergic response until a bit later, the child's immune system is more developed and maybe you're not seeing this effect," Kozyrskij said.

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— Anita Kozyrskij

The findings come as little surprise to parents who have spoken out against the risks of vaccinating infants at an early age.

The prevalence of childhood disorders like asthma and autoimmune disorders like autism has increased over the last few decades, leaving many parents wondering whether childhood vaccinations may be contributing to the rise.

"They're barely out of the protection of the womb before we're sticking vaccines in them," said Irene Gergus, a Winnipeg mother whose son Andrew lost his ability to speak shortly after receiving his fourth DPT shot at 18 months in 1993.

"I'm not against vaccination. I just



DAVID LIPNOWSKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

Anita Kozyrskij says the development of asthma could be related to allergic reactions to immunization.

think they're too young to be receiving (them)."

One parent said she feels vindicated for holding off on vaccines for her two-year-old son.

"I'd done significant reading, and the one thing I'd read is that children are not born with a fully developed immune system and there is this idea that perhaps you should wait for the immune system to mature before you start messing with it," Amanda Jenning said.

Little Dylan will be two in two weeks and his mother said she and her husband will consider vaccines again then.

Eight months ago, Jenning said she had a run-in with a doctor "who tried to scare me into giving (Dylan) his vaccination." She held out. "I made a good decision," she said.

Another parent said his son had his shots as a baby and then at age three developed asthma. Trevor, now a man in his 20s, still suffers from asthma as an adult. Ron Hodgkins said he and his wife will never know for sure if vac-

cines played a role in their son's chronic breathing problems, but it makes him wonder.

"Had we known way back when, then it would have been a different story," Hodgkins said. "I would have questioned it," he said about giving vaccines to babies.

Kozyrskij is the first researcher to study the connection between asthma and vaccines, but said she does not believe the findings will spur a change in the province's vaccination schedule. She said Japan recommended children under 10 months not be vaccinated between 1975 and 1988, and the country saw a spike in the number of childhood cases of whooping cough.

Kozyrskij said she is "pro-vaccination" and noted the safety and effectiveness of vaccines has been studied for years.

"It's not an alarm bell," she said. "We have many years of research on these vaccines and I would say the benefits, by far, outweigh the risks."

Of the 14,000 immunization records

Kozyrskij studied, 11,531 children received at least four doses of DPT.

Overall, nearly 12 per cent of the children who received at least four doses of DPT had asthma. The majority of children who had asthma lived in urban areas and were predominantly male.

Kozyrskij said researchers did not study the risk of asthma among children who did not receive any vaccinations, saying only about 100 children in the province did not receive DPT — a number that would not be statistically significant.

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Free Press web poll

Do you worry about a health risk when children are vaccinated?

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Canadian soldier faces \$20,000 bill

Pregnant wife still not a landed immigrant

By Melissa Leong

TORONTO — A Canadian soldier who met his wife in Cyprus while on a break from his tour in Afghanistan may be stuck with more than \$20,000 in medical bills for their expected child.

Master Cpl. Daniel Joudrey, a 34-year-old electrician who used to live in Manitoba, said he is struggling to pay for the birth of his son next month because his wife, Calliopi, has not finalized her status as a landed immigrant in Canada and has no medical coverage.

"We're happy the baby is coming but we're worried. I'm applying for loans, getting turned down so things aren't looking good," Joudrey said on Thursday from his home in Dundurn, Sask. "I figured I'm Canadian, I'm in the military ... I thought she would be covered the second we got married."

Joudrey, who has been in the military for 14 years, serving in Bosnia and Afghanistan, said he had hoped that because he served his country, his country would look after him and his family. He attended junior high at Grant Park and Grade 12 at Oak Park High School and also lived in Portage la Prairie.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier has on numerous occasions professed the government's "unwavering" support for the Canadian Forces and their families.

Joudrey said he sought help from the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, Saskatchewan Health and his military superiors, without recourse. Calls to National Defence were not

returned.

The couple met and fell in love in August 2006 by a hotel pool in Cyprus where Joudrey was undergoing "decompression" — a program designed to ease the physical and mental rigours of life in the combat zone.

They were married the following March after Joudrey and her nine-year-old daughter moved to Saskatchewan.

Her application for permanent resident status has been delayed by missing paperwork such as a criminal record check and medical records.

She is scheduled for a caesarian section on Feb. 5. Hospital officials recently told them that it would cost \$3,700 a day for her hospital stay, not including fees for the surgeon, anesthesiologist or medications, she said.

"I thought somebody made a mistake," Calliopi Joudrey, 30, said. "Because I'm not Canadian, I don't expect free medical treatment. But I thought because (my husband) is Canadian and it is his baby that it would be different."

Calliopi Joudrey must also pay more for standard hospital services because she is a visitor to the country.

"If you're not a resident of Canada, (hospitals) usually charge about 125 per cent because of additional administrative fees," said Pat Cambridge, assistant director of health registration and vital statistics at Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health.

Daniel Joudrey, who grew up in a military family, said he has already spent more than \$1,800 for bloodwork, doctors visits and other medical bills.

— Canwest News Service

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Word of the Day
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limn
LIM
DEFINITION: paint or draw (a picture or portrait); portray or represent.

The car had a black top, and Sean wanted to limn a panther across the front.

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