



Environmental Factors and Allergic Disorders

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Despite numerous studies on possible associations between environmental exposure and allergic disorders, any conclusions made remain in a matter of controversy. We conducted a review of evidence in relation to environmental and nutritional determinants and wheeze, asthma, atopic dermatitis, and allergic rhinitis. Identified were 263 articles for analysis after consideration of 1093 papers that were published since 2000 and selected by electronic search of the PubMed database using keywords relevant to epidemiological studies. Most were cross-sectional and case-control studies. Several prospective cohort studies revealed inconsistent associations between various environmental factors and the risk of any allergic disorder. Therefore, the evidence was inadequate to infer the presence or absence of a causal relationship between various environmental exposures and allergic diseases. However, evidence is suggestive of positive associations of allergies with heredity. Because almost all the studies were performed in Western countries, the application of these findings to people in other countries, including Japan, may not be appropriate. Further epidemiological information gained from population-based prospective cohort studies, in particular among Japanese together with other Asians, is needed to assess causal relationships between various environmental factors and allergic diseases.

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