

Household Spray Cleaners May **Raise Asthma Risk** in Adults

By Janet Smart

According to new research, using common household cleaning sprays and air fresheners, as little as once a week, could raise the risk of asthma in adults.

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways, which causes difficulties in breathing. Symptoms vary from person to person, but may include shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing and wheezing. According to The Asthma Society of Canada, researchers have determined that asthma can be caused by both hereditary and environmental factors. About 500 Canadians die from asthma every year. However, most of these deaths could have been prevented with education and asthma management.

The research, published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, used data collected from a 10-country database,



called the European Community Respiratory Health Survey. The researchers studied more than 3,500 people over a nine-year period, to see how many developed asthma and whether cleaning could be a cause.

The researchers found that the risk of developing asthma increased with the frequency of cleaning and the number of different sprays used. For those people exposed to cleaning sprays once a week, the increase was about 30 to 50 per cent higher.

Though more research is required to define whether cleaning products are a direct cause of asthma, Jan-Paul Zock, an epidemiologist at the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology in Barcelona, Spain, who led the

study, feels that frequent use of household cleaning sprays may be an important risk factor for adult asthma. 