

Tracks FAQs

How Do I Link Asthma Rates And Air Quality Data?

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC—safer, healthier people.

[Desiree Robinson] Hello everyone. Thank you for tuning in to the Tracks FAQs Podcast, where we explore topics about CDC’s National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network. In this podcast series, CDC scientists address frequently asked questions about the National Tracking Network, including using and applying data, running queries, and much more. Epidemiologist Heather Strosnider joins us to answer one of our top questions. Thanks for joining us.

[Heather Strosnider] Thank you.

[Desiree Robinson] Heather, one common question we get from Tracking Network users is... *How can I link asthma rates to air quality data?*

[Heather Strosnider] The Tracking Network does not currently support linking health data and environmental data, such as linking asthma rates and air quality. However, we are working to include datasets on the Tracking Network containing “pre-linked” information.

We have to take many factors into account to determine connections between health problems and the environment; it’s complicated. Although one piece of data might indicate that residents of an area with poor air quality have higher rates of asthma, the data might not take into account other factors possibly causing the higher rates of asthma. Asthma rates could also be high in a county because the county has an unusually high rate of smoking. In such an instance, the heightened asthma rates may be due to the effects of smoking, either direct or secondhand smoke, rather than to the effects of air pollution. This is just one example of how, as I said, it can be complicated to understand the relationship between health and the environment. Stay tuned as we continue to add new data and features to the Tracking Network.

[Desiree Robinson] Special thanks to CDC Epidemiologist Heather Strosnider for joining us for this episode of Tracks FAQs. Thank you, Heather. That’s all for this episode of Tracks FAQs. To submit a question for a CDC Tracking expert to address in this series, please e-mail trackingsupport@cdc.gov.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO 24/7.