Last July, the FDA banned the use of BPA in plastics used for baby bottles and sippy cups. Now, a new study from Columbia University may have found a link between childhood exposure to BPA and the growing prevalence of asthma. NY1’s Erin Billups filed the following report.

One in 10 kids suffer with asthma in the United State and in New York City the numbers are even worse, especially in Harlem, Washington Heights and the South Bronx where 25 percent of children have asthma or issues with wheezing.

"The reason we are doing this study is to try and understand why asthma rates are so high," says Robin Whyatt, a clinical and environmental health sciences professor at the Mailman School of Public Health.

What Whyatt and her team of researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health found during their 15-year study of more than 500 families in those Northern New York City communities, is that there is a link between early childhood exposure to the chemical Bisphenol A, also known as BPA, and asthma.
"The major source that we found among children is in the diet. The reason for that is that it's used in the lining of cans. So as children drink canned sodas or eat canned foods, they can get exposure," explains Whyatt.

BPA is a chemical that looks and acts like the estrogen hormone, confusing the body. It's used in certain plastics and epoxy resins. It's also found in dental sealants and cash register receipts.

"I think it’s scary," says Celena Topping, a Bronx resident.

"It’s very disturbing for parents to know that," says Grace Gaikba, a Harlem resident.

BPA is used in many products so eliminating exposure to it completely may not be possible yet, but there are steps you can take.

"Have the children eat a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables," suggests Whyatt.

Whyatt also advises parents to avoid using plastics with the recycling labels three, six and seven, and to limit exposure to plastics labeled one, two, four and five.

Naomi Jones of Harlem, who copes with asthma, says making all of those changes may not be possible for many families.

"My budget is within a certain means and I can only buy from a certain store in a certain area, I mean, that doesn't give a lot of options. There needs to be laws and policies about how and why it's manufactured," says Jones.

Dr. Whyatt agrees and says first their study must be replicated.

"The goal now is to do a lot of studies of BPA so that it can help inform the regulators," she adds.