

Asthma and Tobacco

FACT SHEET



Asthma

Asthma is a chronic, inflammatory lung condition characterized by airway inflammation, bronchoconstriction, and increased mucus production resulting in recurring episodes of breathing problems, including coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Most episodes of asthma result from bronchial hyper-responsiveness to triggers, such as allergens, respiratory infections, environmental tobacco smoke, mold/dust, and exercise.¹

National Facts and Trends

- In 2005, more than 32 million Americans had been diagnosed with asthma during their lifetime.¹
- The national median asthma rate in 2006 was 8.5%.²
- Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalization for children younger than 15 years of age and accounts for 12.8 million missed days of school annually.¹
- Low-income populations, minorities, and children living in inner cities experience disproportionately higher morbidity and mortality due to asthma.³
- In 2007, the estimated total cost of asthma in the United States was \$14.7 billion.⁴
- Asthma is a leading chronic illness among children and youth in the United States.⁵
- In 2004, 5.1 million school-aged children and youth were reported to currently have asthma, and 3.2 million had an asthma episode or attack within the previous year.⁶

Maine Facts and Trends

- Asthma prevalence in New England is significantly higher than the rest of the country, and the numbers of people affected are increasing.⁷
- Maine asthma rates among adults (9.7%) are higher than the national average (8.5%).² Women suffer from asthma more than men. The rate is 12.2% in women and 7% in men.²
- The MaineCare population reports a higher prevalence of asthma, and higher prevalence of persistent asthma, and a higher rate of hospitalizations.⁸
- Nearly one in three (31%) kindergartners are exposed to secondhand smoke on a routine basis.⁹
- The percentage of children in Maine who have ever had asthma is 14.6%; children with current asthma, 10.7%.⁷
- Women in Maine are more likely to have a reported death from asthma than males.⁸
- People with low income (<\$25,000) have a higher prevalence of asthma. Children's asthma rates are highest in homes with <\$25,000 and higher in households where there is an adult smoking.⁸

The Story Behind the Facts: Why Is this Information Important

- Children with asthma who are exposed to secondhand smoke generally have increased asthma severity and decreased lung function.¹⁰
- Asthma is the leading cause of disability and the most common chronic disorder in children, having a significant impact on Maine's healthcare system, including the cost of healthcare.¹
- Childhood asthma leads to a decrease in participation in school activities and is one of the leading causes of school absence due to illness. It is estimated that there are 65,000 school absences a year in Maine due to asthma.¹
- The rate of asthma has doubled in the last 20 years, with the burden falling disproportionately on low-income and minority communities.¹
- Exposure to secondhand smoke and exposure duration are important factors in the induction of childhood asthma.¹¹

References:

¹ US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Asthma Prevalence, Health Care Use and Mortality: United States, 2003-05", <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/ashtma03-05/ashtma03-05.htm#1>.

² Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2006.

³ US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Asthma's Impact on Children and Adolescents, <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/children.htm>.

⁴ National Institutes of Health: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institutes, "Morbidity and Mortality: 2007 Chart Book on Cardiovascular, Lung and Blood Diseases", <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/docs/07-ctbk.pdf>.

⁵ US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Healthy Youth!: Asthma", <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/Asthma/>.

⁶ American Lung Association, Epidemiology and Statistics Unit, Research and Program Services. [Trends in Asthma Morbidity and Mortality](#)

⁷ Asthma Regional Council of New England, "The Burden of Asthma in New England: A Report by the Asthma Regional Council, March 2006", <http://www.health.ri.gov/disease/asthma/burden-ne.pdf>.

⁸ Asthma Status Report, Maine, 2002.

⁹ Child Health Survey 2003-2004.

¹⁰ Mannino, DM, DM Homa, and SC Redd. "Involuntary Smoking and Asthma Severity in Children: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey." *Chest* 122, no. 2 (2002): 409-415.

¹¹ Vork, KL, RL Broadwin, and RJ Blaisdell. "Developing Asthma in Childhood from Exposure to Secondhand Tobacco Smoke: Insights from a Meta Regression." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 115, no. 10 (Oct. 2007).



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