

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of the tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. During an asthma attack, these airways become narrow, and their linings swell and produce excess mucus. This makes breathing difficult, and causes wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. Asthma rates are increasing in Connecticut, and Connecticut rates are higher than the U.S. rates of 8.2% for adults and 9.4% for children.

Who is affected by asthma in Connecticut?

- About 9.2% of Connecticut adults currently have asthma.
- Approximately 11.3% of children have asthma.
- Hispanic children are the most likely to have asthma, followed by black children and white children.
- Between 2005 and 2009, the asthma emergency department visit rate for Hispanic children increased 50.9% with non-Hispanic black children experiencing the second highest rate.
- Hispanic adults had 5.2 times the rate of asthma hospitalizations as non-Hispanic white adults from 2005-2009.
- Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely as whites to die from asthma.

Data Source: *The Burden of Asthma in Connecticut - 2012 Surveillance Report*

Why is it important to know if you have a family history of asthma?

- Asthma often runs in families. Allergies or sensitivity to “triggers” in the environment—especially to dust and animals—can make symptoms worse for some people.
- Asthma is a complex disease involving many different genes and many different environmental factors. Scientists do not yet know enough about genes related to asthma to improve how they prevent, diagnose, or treat asthma.

Why is it important to learn about asthma?

The good news is that asthma can be controlled with proper medical management and patient compliance with treatment.

- See your doctor regularly.
- Follow your doctor’s directions for taking asthma medicines, even when you feel well.
- Avoid triggers that cause asthma symptoms or make them worse.
- Ask your health care provider for information about what you can do to manage your asthma symptoms.
- Ask your doctor for a written treatment plan that tells you what to do when symptoms start.

Your Family Health History

Know your past. Act in the present. Protect your future.

Asthma Resources:

Infoline 2-1-1 ... www.infoline.org

National Asthma Education and Prevention Association

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/naepp

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/health/asthma.htm

American Lung Association (ALA)

www.lung.org

For additional information, call 1 (800) LUNG-USA (1 [800] 586-4872)

American Lung Association of CT

www.lungne.org

For additional information, call 1 (800) LUNG-USA (1 [800] 586-4872)

Connecticut Department of Public Health - Asthma Program

www.ct.gov/dph/asthma, call the **DPH Asthma Program**: (860) 509-8251