

Asthma

STATISTICS:

- In 2001, 20.3 million Americans had asthma and 12 million had had an asthma attack in the previous year.
- If a person has a parent with asthma, he or she is three to six times more likely to develop asthma than is a person who does not have a parent with asthma.
- In 2004, there were 3,780 deaths attributed to asthma, which is 1.3 deaths per 100,000 people.
- In 2004, there were 13.6 million visits to office-based physicians for asthma, and one million hospital outpatient department visits.

Reduce Your Risk Month

RESOURCES:

**CDC/National Center for Environmental Health
Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects**
1-800-CDC-INFO
<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma>

Allergy & Asthma Network – Mothers of Asthmatics
1-800-878-4403
<http://www.aanma.org>

Allies Against Asthma
University of Michigan School of Public Health
<http://asthma.umich.edu>

American Lung Association
<http://www.lungusa.org>



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Asthma is a disease that affects your lungs. It is the most common long-term disease of children. It causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing. It is with you all the time, but you may have asthma attacks only when something bothers your lungs.

It is known that family history may increase your risk of developing asthma, but in most cases it's not known what causes asthma to develop, and there is no known cure. Asthma can be controlled by knowing the warning signs of an attack, avoiding things that trigger an attack, and following the advice of your doctor. When you control your asthma, you won't have symptoms like wheezing or coughing, you'll sleep better, you won't miss work or school, you'll be able to take part in all physical activities, and you won't have to visit the hospital. People with allergy symptoms or asthma are sensitive to "triggers," including particles carried in the air. These "triggers" can set off a reaction in your lungs and other parts of your body. Triggers can be found indoors or outdoors.

Triggers can be simple things like:

- Cold air
- Tobacco smoke and wood smoke
- Perfume, paint, hair spray, or any strong odors or fumes
- Allergens (particles that cause allergies) such as dust mites, pollen, molds, pollution, and animal dander (tiny scales or particles that fall off hair), feathers or skin and saliva from any pets
- Common cold, influenza, and other respiratory illnesses

You may be able to add more triggers to this list. Other things may also trigger your asthma or allergies. It's important to learn your asthma triggers. Ask your doctor to help.

Your doctor may suggest:

- Keeping an asthma diary
- Skin testing to test for allergies

Finding triggers isn't always easy. If you do know your triggers, cutting down exposure to them may help avoid asthma and allergy attacks. If you don't know your triggers, try to limit your exposure to one suspected trigger at a time. Watch to see if you get better. This may show you if the trigger was a problem for you.