



National Asthma Epidemic

- An estimated 20 million Americans suffer from asthma (1 in 15 Americans). Since the early 1980s, the prevalence of asthma has been increasing for all ages, races and sexes.¹
- More than 9.5 million U.S children under 18 years of age (13%) have ever been diagnosed with asthma.²
- Each day, 11 Americans die from asthma. There are more than 4,000 deaths due to asthma each year, many of which are avoidable with proper treatment and care. In addition, asthma is indicated as “contributing factor” for nearly 7,000 other deaths each year.³
- The [asthma] death rate for children under 19 years old has increased by nearly 80% percent since 1980.⁶
- More women than men die of asthma; women account for nearly 65% of asthma deaths overall.³
- In 2005, 5.2% of children had at least one asthma attack in the previous year (3.8 million children). Nearly two of every three children who currently have asthma had at least one attack in the past 12 months.⁴
- Direct costs accounted for nearly \$10 billion (hospitalizations the single largest portion of direct cost) and indirect costs of \$8 billion (lost earnings due to illness or death).⁵
- For adults, asthma is the fourth leading cause of work absenteeism and “presenteeism,” resulting in nearly 15 million missed or lost work days each year, and a total cost of nearly \$3 billion in total lost productivity.⁶
- Among children ages 5 to 17, asthma is the leading cause of school absences due to a chronic illness. It accounts for an annual loss of more than 14 million school days per year (approximately 8 days for each student with asthma).⁵
- Among children ages 5 to 17, asthma accounts for more hospitalizations than any other childhood disease. It is estimated that children with asthma spend nearly 8 million days per year restricted to bed.⁵

¹ “Asthma at a Glance,” National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), U.S. CDC, 1999.

² Bloom B, Cohen RA. Summary health statistics for U.S. Children: National Health Interview Survey, 2007. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(239). 2009.

³ “New Asthma Estimates: Tracking Prevalence, Health Care and Mortality,” NCHS, CDC, 2001.

⁴ Akinbami L. The State of childhood asthma, United States, 1980-2005. Advance data from vital and health statistics; no 381, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2006.

⁵ “The Costs of Asthma,” Asthma and Allergy Foundation 1992 and 1998 Study, 2000 Update.

⁶ “Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report,” Surveillance for Asthma, U.S. CDC, 2002.