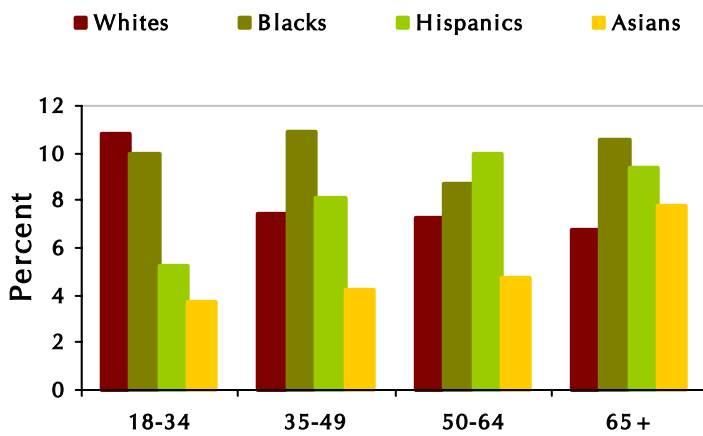


HEALTH DATA FACT SHEET May 2008

May is Asthma Awareness Month, May 6 is Asthma Awareness Day

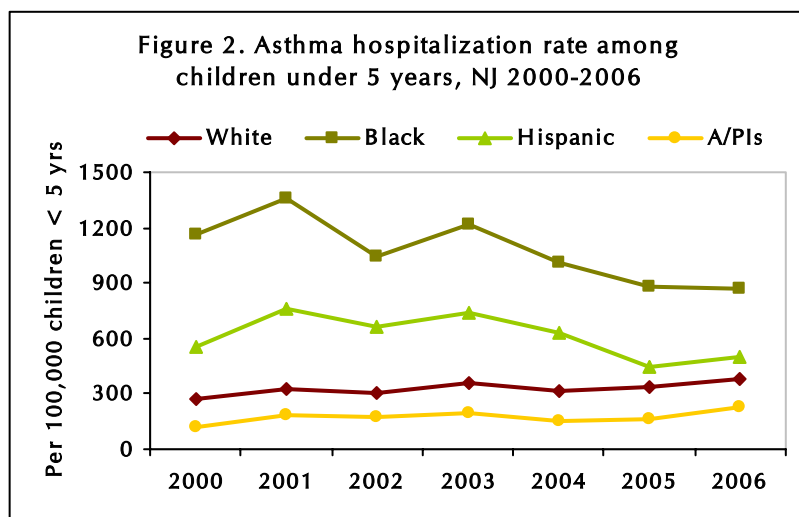
- Asthma is a chronic lung disease affecting the airways that carry air into and out of the lungs. It is characterized by inflammation and/or obstruction of the airways. Symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightening and coughing.
- There are two types of asthma, allergic or extrinsic asthma (symptoms are triggered by an allergic reaction) and non-allergic or intrinsic asthma (symptoms triggered by factors not related to allergies). Many symptoms of allergic and non-allergic asthma are the same. Some environmental triggers of asthma include viral or bacterial infections; allergens such as dust mites, pet dander, pollens, or mold; irritants such as tobacco smoke, chemical gases or fumes; and other factors such as anxiety, stress, exercise, cold or dry air, hyperventilation, or food allergies.
- According to the National Institutes of Health, asthma affects approximately 20 million people in the United States. It causes nearly 5,500 deaths each year nationwide.
- New Jersey Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (NJBRSF) data from 2004-2006 suggest that approximately 516,000 New Jersey adults aged 18 years and older currently have asthma (8%).
- Asthma prevalence is twice as high among NJ women than men ages 18 and older. An estimated 345,800 women have been diagnosed with asthma, compared to about 170,200 men.
- According to the 2006 NJBRSF, 15% of New Jersey children have been diagnosed with asthma, of whom 69% continually suffer from its effects. An estimated 218,900 NJ children currently have the condition (10%).

Figure. 1. Asthma prevalence among NJ adults by race/ethnicity and age group, 2006



- Among adults, blacks in NJ have the highest asthma prevalence (10%), followed by whites (8%), and Hispanic/Latinos (7%). Asians have the lowest prevalence with 5% reporting that they have asthma.
- Asthma prevalence generally decreases with age. Overall, prevalence is 16% higher among 18 to 34 year olds compared to those aged 65 years and older. Prevalence among blacks and whites decreased from ages 18 to 64, continued decreasing among whites but rose sharply among blacks at age 65 and older. In contrast, asthma prevalence among 18 to 34-year-old Asians increased from 4% in this age group to 8% among 65 year-olds. (Figure 1)

- From 2003-2005 NJBRFSS data, nearly 18% of New Jersey adults aged 18 years and older reported making one or more asthma-related visits to the emergency room.



- Hospitalizations due to asthma were 3 times higher among blacks than whites. Hispanic/Latino hospitalization rates were nearly 2 times higher than whites.
- Hospitalizations related to asthma among children younger than age 5 years have been declining since 2001 for blacks and Hispanics/Latinos. Still, rates are highest among blacks (874.4 per 100,000 children under age 5) and Hispanics/Latinos (498.8) compared to whites (376.4) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (231.1). (Figure 2)

- New Jersey death rates from asthma overall were 1.2 per 100,000 population in 2005. Death rates among blacks (2.8 per 100,000) are 3 times higher than among whites (0.8 per 100,000). The number of deaths among Hispanics/Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders were too low to calculate a reliable rate.
- The [Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey \(PACNJ\)](#), partially supported by NJDHSS, is the statewide coalition on asthma awareness. Some initiatives PACNJ is currently undertaking include school nurse asthma training, and Train-the-trainer programs in three urban cities with the highest asthma hospitalization rates.
- New Jersey has been selected by The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality ([AHRQ](#)), to participate in the Learning Partnership to Decrease Disparities in Pediatric Asthma Project. The state has coordinated a team comprised of state, local, faith-based, healthcare and coalition representatives with a primary focus to develop a state action plan for decreasing disparities in pediatric asthma. The New Jersey Asthma Action Plan implements a comprehensive asthma outreach/ education program in three cities with high-risk populations in an effort to improve the quality of care and life for children with asthma.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can people with asthma do?

- See their doctor as instructed even when they are feeling well. For information about New Jersey's Centers for Primary Health Care (CPHC), which provide care for the underserved, visit www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/cphc.
- Take medications as instructed even if they are feeling well. New Jersey offers several programs for uninsured people depending on age and income. For more information, visit www.nj.gov/health/fhs/asthma/asthma_faq.shtml#11.
- Ask their doctor to complete an Asthma Treatment Plan. For more information, contact the Pediatric Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ) at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org to download the form.
- Talk with their doctor about getting a flu shot every year.
- Talk with their doctor about how other health problems might affect their asthma.
- Talk with their doctor early on about managing asthma during pregnancy and about any change in symptoms that might occur during pregnancy.
- Learn to identify and avoid asthma triggers, including those at work, recognize early symptoms, and take action when symptoms start. For more information, contact PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org.
- Contact New Jersey Quitnet at 1-866-NJSTOPS or www.nj.quitnet.com for information about smoking cessation.
- Learn how to prevent work-related asthma by visiting the New Jersey Occupational Health Surveillance Program web page at www.nj.gov/health/eoh/survweb/wra/index.shtml.
- Learn more about New Jersey laws which help children breathe easier in school. For more information, contact the PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org to download the "Asthma and NJ Laws" Fact Sheet.

What can health professionals do?

- Learn more about the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma by visiting www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/index.htm.
- Make sure that all patients who have asthma are given an Asthma Treatment Plan. For more information, contact PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org to download the form in English or Spanish.
- Learn more about managing asthma in the school setting and about New Jersey laws that help children breathe easier in school by contacting PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or by visiting www.pacnj.org.
- Learn more about the recognition, diagnosis, and reporting of work-related asthma by visiting the New Jersey Occupational Health Surveillance Program web page at www.nj.gov/health/eoh/survweb/wra/index.shtml.
- New Jersey law requires physicians and advanced practice nurses to report work-related asthma cases for proper public health follow-up.

What can other residents do?

- Parents can learn more about New Jersey laws that help children breathe easier in school. For more information, contact the PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org to download the "Asthma and NJ Laws" Fact Sheet.
- School administrators can make sure that their schools qualify for the PACNJ Asthma Friendly School Award. For more information about criteria or this program, contact PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or visit www.pacnj.org.
- Child care providers can learn more about managing asthma in the child care setting by contacting PACNJ at 866-PACNJ-88 or by visiting www.pacnj.org.
- Employers can learn how to control or eliminate exposure to asthma-causing agents and prevent work-related asthma in employees by visiting the New Jersey Occupational Health Surveillance Program web page at www.nj.gov/health/eoh/survweb/wra/index.shtml.
- All New Jersey residents can take action to control outdoor air pollution. For information about how individuals can help to reduce air pollution, visit the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection web page at www.nj.gov/dep/airworkgroups/tips.html.

Where can I find more information?

- **New Jersey Asthma Awareness and Education Program** - www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/asthma/index.shtml
- **Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey** - www.pacnj.org
- **National Heart Lung and Blood Institute** - www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma_WhatIs.html
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** - www.cdc.gov/asthma
- **Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics** - www.aanma.org

Sources:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services: [Center for Health Statistics](#), unpublished vital statistics data

Center for Health Statistics: 1998-2003 NJ Uniform Billing Hospitalization (unpublished data)

[Asthma in New Jersey-Annual Update 2006](#)

New Jersey Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (unpublished data): <http://www.state.nj.us/health/chs/brfss.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Children: National Health Interview Survey, 2002](#)

American Lung Association: [Asthma & Children](#)

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology: [Asthma – A growing problem for women](#)

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: [Asthma Overview](#)



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