

Childhood Asthma

Tennessee Fact Sheet

Asthma is the most common chronic illness of children in the U.S.

Approximately 140,000 Tennessee children under the age of 18 have asthma

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung condition that causes inflammation of the airways (breathing tubes). Inflammation means the airways are swollen and produce mucus. During an asthma flare-up, inflammation increases and the muscles around the airways tighten up, making them narrower. The swelling, mucus and tightness of the airways makes it hard for air to move in and out and causes symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

What causes asthma?

The exact cause of asthma is unclear. However, there are many recognized asthma triggers that can lead to asthma symptoms and flare-ups.

Why is asthma a problem?

- Asthma is a leading cause of missed school days.
- Asthma can interfere with a child's ability to sleep, play, do well in school and participate fully in school and family activities.
- Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalizations among Tennessee children 1-17 years old.
- Between 1997 and 2006, 61 Tennessee children between the ages of 1 and 17 died as the result of asthma.

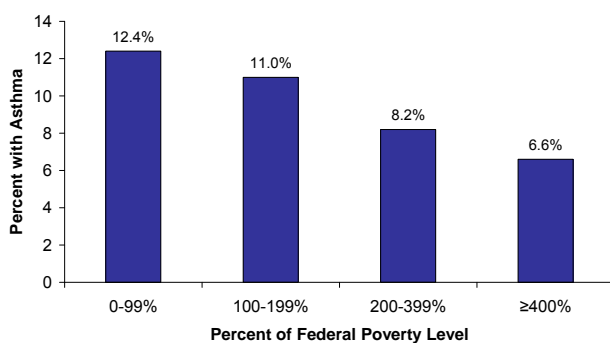
Common Asthma Triggers

Animal dander
Dust mites
Cockroaches
Pollen
Mold
Tobacco smoke
Air pollution
Strong odors
Cold air or changes in weather
Exercise
Strong emotions or stress
Some medicines
Some food preservatives
Respiratory infections

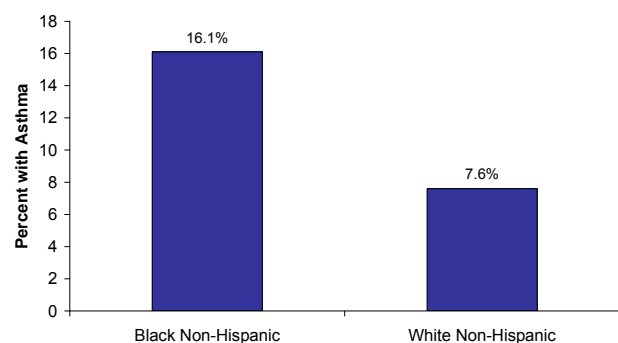
Asthma disproportionately affects low-income and minority children

- Asthma prevalence increases with decreasing family income.
- Asthma prevalence is over twice as high among black non-Hispanic children compared to white non-Hispanic children.

Current Asthma Prevalence by Household Income
0-17 Year Olds, Tennessee, 2007



Current Asthma Prevalence by Race
0-17 Year Olds, Tennessee, 2007



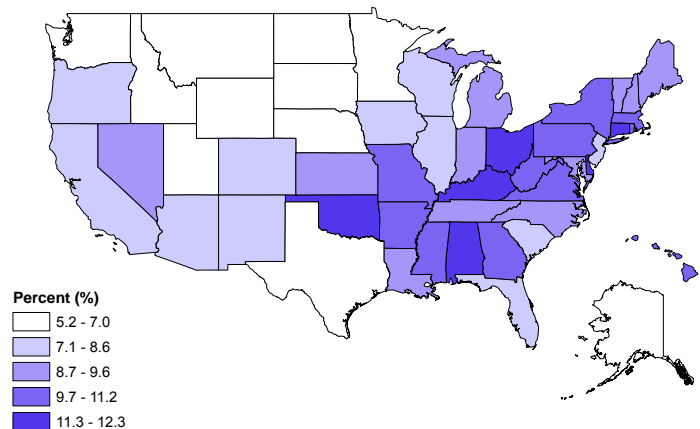
Childhood Asthma Fact Sheet *cont.*

What is the healthcare burden of childhood asthma in Tennessee?

- Hospitalizations and emergency department visits are a serious consequence of asthma and an indication of severe and/or poorly managed disease.
- Each year there are approximately 2,300 inpatient hospitalizations and 14,100 emergency department visits for asthma among children aged 1-17 years old.
- In 2006, combined inpatient and outpatient hospital charges for childhood asthma totaled \$29.1 million.

How does Tennessee compare to other states?

- 9.5% of Tennessee children aged 0-17 years currently have asthma, compared to 9.0% for the entire United States.
- Among individual states, childhood asthma prevalence ranged from 5.2% in South Dakota to 12.3% in Alabama and Ohio.
- Tennessee had the 20th highest prevalence rate (tied with Michigan) among the 50 states.



Current childhood asthma prevalence, United States, 2007

Childhood asthma cannot be cured, but it *can* be managed and controlled.

Asthma management activities include:

- *Regular doctor visits*
- *Developing and using a written asthma action plan*
- *Avoiding asthma triggers*
- *Monitoring symptoms to assess asthma control*
- *Using medications as directed*

With proper management asthma symptoms can be kept under control. By working together to ensure the above steps are followed, parents, health care providers, and schools can ensure that kids with asthma stay healthy and active.

The mission of the State of Tennessee Asthma Taskforce (STAT) is to promote lung health and reduce asthma disease and disparities through agency and community collaborations, advocacy, and education. Additional information about asthma management and STAT may be found at <http://health.state.tn.us/MCH/asthma.htm>.

References:

Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment (2008). The Burden of Asthma in Tennessee. Tennessee Department of Health, Nashville, TN.

Office of Policy, Planning and Assessment (2009). Childhood Asthma in Tennessee: 1997-2007. Tennessee Department of Health, Nashville, TN.

Additional childhood asthma data, along with detailed information on data sources and analysis methodology may be found in the above cited reports (available online at <http://hit.state.tn.us/reports.aspx>).