



NCHS Data on Asthma

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help us understand the populations' health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease involving episodes or attacks of small airways narrowing from inflammation and hyperresponsiveness to asthma "triggers". Many triggers exist, including allergens, infections, exercise, abrupt changes in the weather, or exposure to airway irritants, such as tobacco smoke. Asthma attacks can vary from mild to life-threatening, and involve shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, chest pain or tightness, or any combination of these symptoms.

It is poorly understood why certain people develop asthma or why asthma has become more common over the past two decades. What is better understood are the factors that cause people with asthma to have asthma attacks as well as the means of preventing and controlling attacks. Tracking different aspects of asthma – prevalence, health utilization, and mortality – provides information about how well the Nation is addressing the different challenges posed by asthma.

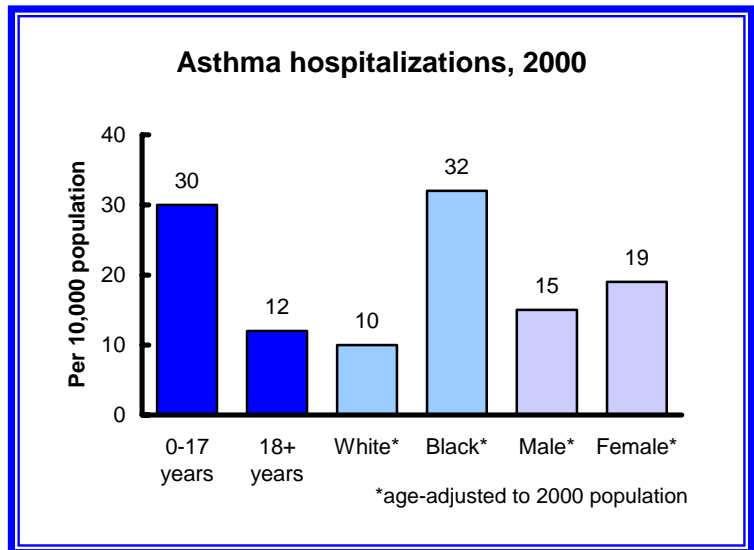
Key Findings

Prevalence

- In 2001, 20.3 million people (73 per 1,000) currently had asthma, of which 6.3 million were children under 18 years of age.
- Current asthma prevalence was highest for non-Hispanic blacks at 83 per 1,000 population.
- Among adults, asthma was higher among women, but for children, boys were more likely than girls to have asthma.

Health care utilization

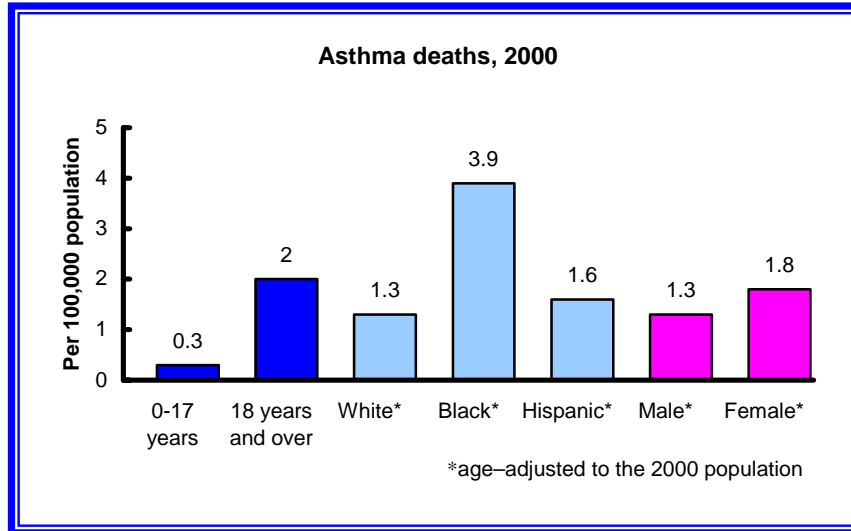
- In 2000, there were about 10.4 million outpatient visits for asthma to private physician offices and outpatient departments, 1.8 million visits to the emergency department, and about one-half million hospitalizations.
- In 2000, non-Hispanic black persons were over three times as likely to be hospitalized for asthma and to die from asthma as non-Hispanic white persons.
- Young children (ages 4 and under) had the highest rate of hospitalization for asthma at 66 hospitalizations per 10,000 population versus 30 per 10,000 for all children under 18 years and 12 per 10,000 for adults 18 years and older.



Source: National Hospital Discharge Survey, 2000

Mortality

- In 2000, 4,487 people died from asthma, or 1.6 per 100,000 people.
- Among children, asthma deaths are rare. In 2000, 223 children aged 0-17 years died from asthma, or 0.3 deaths per 100,000 children compared to 2.0 deaths per 100,000 adults aged 18 and over.
- Non-Hispanic blacks were the most likely to die from asthma and had an asthma death rate over 200% higher than non-Hispanic whites and 160% higher than Hispanics. Females had an asthma death rate about 40% higher than males.



Source: Mortality component of the National Vital Statistics System

Asthma Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Health Interview Survey** – obtains information on the nation’s health status through confidential household interviews that measure: access to health care, utilization of health care services, health insurance coverage, causes of injury, immunization rates, and HIV testing practices. This survey measures different aspects of asthma prevalence and asthma related health care use. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>
- **National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey** - conducts surveys of private physician offices to obtain nationally representative information about health care visits including patient demographics, patient complaints, physician diagnoses and prescription medications. This survey provides information on visits to physician offices for asthma. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/namcsdes.htm>
- **National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey** – collects information from medical records from a nationally representative sample of short stay nonfederal hospitals about visits to hospital outpatient departments and emergency departments. The information collected is very similar to the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. Information from this survey provides estimates of asthma visits to hospital outpatient departments and emergency rooms. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/ahcd1.htm>
- **National Hospital Discharge Survey** - is a national probability survey designed to meet the need for information on characteristics of inpatients discharged from non-Federal short-stay hospitals in the United States. The survey data includes hospitalizations for asthma. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/hdasd/nhds.htm>
- **National Vital Statistics System** – collects mortality information from death certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including characteristics of the decedent and underlying and contributing causes of death. Asthma death rates are available from this data system. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm>

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs> or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.

