

## CONCLUSION

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**T**his document describes an ambitious strategy for tackling asthma over the next five years. A concerted effort along these lines could identify strategies to reduce rates of asthma and could significantly improve asthma management for children, minorities and the poor. Now is the time to take full advantage of the discoveries of the last ten years in asthma research.

Highest priorities for additional investment are to: 1) accelerate the pace of research to understand the causes of asthma and test prevention strategies; 2) reduce the burden for people with the disease through expansion of public health programs and research; 3) eliminate the disproportionate burden of asthma in minority populations and those living in poverty; and, 4) enhance surveillance and evaluation efforts in order to better target populations in need, and improve public health programs.

In Fiscal Year 2000, DHHS is spending over \$180 million on asthma research and public health programs, up approximately 16 percent from the previous year. This provides a strong base for further investments over the longer term — investments that promise substantial gains in reducing the incidence, prevalence, severity, and social and economic burdens of this chronic disease.



Photo courtesy of New York City Department of Health – Photographer: Michael Paras

**Table 2. Action Against Asthma - Urgent Needs  
Top Priorities for Investment**

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**1. Determine the Causes of Asthma and Develop Interventions to Prevent Its Onset**

- Improve understanding of early life origins of asthma
- Study gene-environment interactions and links to characteristics of asthma
- Investigate adult onset of asthma
- Test strategies for prevention

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**2. Reduce the Burden of Asthma for People with the Disease**

**Promote wider use of current knowledge to diagnose and manage asthma: public health actions**

- Help health care providers practice up-to-date asthma care
- Educate patients and their families
- Evaluate and address organizational barriers to quality care for asthma
- Expand asthma control activities in community settings
- Sustain support for state and local public health action

**Discover and develop improved means of managing asthma: research**

- Improve understanding of what makes asthma persistent and severe
- Improve means of controlling triggers of asthma and allergic responses
- Investigate the relationship between air pollutants and asthma
- Investigate variations in patient response to asthma medications
- Establish causes and risk factors of asthma fatalities
- Develop non-invasive methods for diagnosis and disease monitoring
- Expand research on asthma in pregnancy

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**3. Eliminate the Disproportionate Burden of Asthma in Minority Populations and those Living in Poverty**

- Promote wider use of current knowledge to diagnose and manage asthma, focusing on minority and low income populations
- Improve access to quality care
- Expand research on asthma in special population groups
- Investigate access to care and evaluate quality

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**4. Track the Disease and Assess Effectiveness of Asthma Programs**

- Establish coordinated and systematic local, state and national systems for asthma surveillance.
- Evaluate public health and health services interventions. Disseminate results.