

African Americans and Asthma

IN NORTH CAROLINA

What is Asthma?

- Asthma is a chronic (long-term) lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways.¹
- Common signs and symptoms of asthma may include wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe), chest tightness, shortness of breath, and coughing.
- For people with asthma, contact with allergens or asthma triggers (like pollen, mold, animal dander, dust mites), secondhand tobacco smoke, air pollution, occupational hazards, exercise, and airway infections may make asthma symptoms worse. When asthma symptoms get intense and/or when there are additional symptoms, an asthma attack may occur.
- Severe asthma attacks may require emergency care, and they can cause death.



Why is asthma an important health issue for African Americans?

In 2011, African-Americans reported having current asthma at a rate similar to that of Whites (9.8% of African-Americans in North Carolina currently have asthma, compared to 9.0% of Whites).²



African-Americans have some of the highest asthma hospitalization rates in North Carolina. In 2011, the asthma hospitalization rate for African Americans was 19.4 per 10,000 (compared to 6.7 per 10,000 for Whites).³



In 2011, nearly **1 in 10**
African Americans
in North Carolina reported
having current asthma.²

What can you do to control your asthma?⁴⁻⁶

- Work with your doctor or other healthcare provider to learn how to manage your asthma.
- Get a written asthma Action plan from your doctor. Make sure you understand it and have it updated at least once a year.
- Learn which medicines you should take and when you should take each of them.
- Learn what may trigger your asthma and take action(s) in reducing those triggers.
- Learn how to monitor your asthma and to recognize and respond quickly to warning signs of an attack.
- Participate in an asthma self-management class.
- Get a flu shot every year (available in the fall), especially if you are or will be pregnant during the flu season.

Where can I find more information about asthma?

- North Carolina Asthma Program:
www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov
or call (919) 707-5213
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/asthma
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute:
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/
- American Lung Association:
www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/
- Environmental Protection Agency:
www.epa.gov/iaq/iaqhouse.html

SOURCES:

- ¹ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. What is Asthma? (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/>). Accessed June 27, 2013.
- ² North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011.
- ³ North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Asthma Hospitalization Data, 2011.
- ⁴ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. So You Have Asthma (http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have_asthma.pdf). Accessed July 13, 2013.
- ⁵ American Lung Association. Taking Control of Asthma (<http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/taking-control-of-asthma/>). Accessed July 13, 2013.
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Asthma: Flu Shots – Get Vaccinated (<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/flu.html>). Accessed July 13, 2013.



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