

Louisiana Asthma Policy Brief:

Decreasing the Health and Economic Consequences of Asthma

According to the 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 11.7% of adults in Louisiana reported ever being diagnosed with asthma.

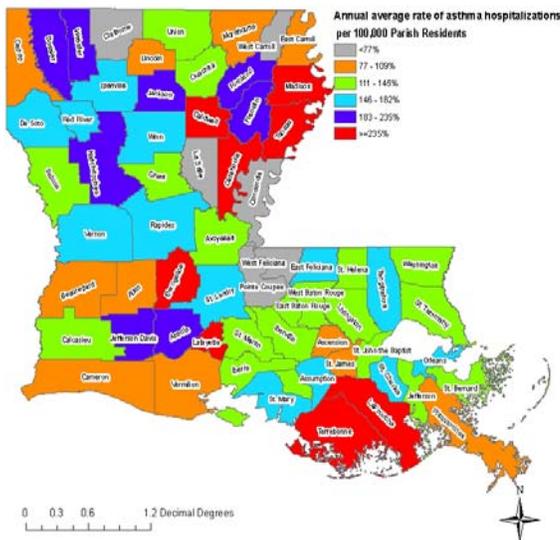
According to the 2008 BRFSS, Louisiana residents between the ages of 18-24, with current asthma, doubled from 6.3% to 13.3%.

In 2008, the Louisiana office of Medicaid reported spending more than \$27 million on asthmatic children 0-10 years of age.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports 22.7% of Louisiana high school students have missed school due to asthma in the past 12 months.

Asthma Overview

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease in the lungs, specifically of the airways, which become narrowed, inflamed, and choked with mucus. These airway changes cause the breathing problems that occur in people with asthma. Asthma attacks are usually caused by tobacco smoke, inhaled allergens, medications, food and food additives, exercise, respiratory viral infections, weather (i.e. cold air), strong emotions, some alcoholic beverages, and irritants within the environment.



Why is Asthma one of the leading chronic conditions?

Inadequate control of asthma has serious health and economic consequences for the child or adult, their family and the state. Uncontrolled asthma can lead to increased hospitalization, increased emergency room and urgent care treatment, missed days of work and negative impact on children's school attendance and a decrease in physical activity.

How to Improve Asthma Control:

- The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recommends that all persons with asthma
- use an asthma action plan administered by a qualified healthcare professional,
 - receive asthma education by a qualified healthcare provider and/or specialists,
 - obtain periodic follow-up visits,
 - avoid environmental exposure to allergens and irritants.

Best Practice Asthma Policies

Evidence continues to mount that the burden of asthma where asthmatics learn, live, and seek healthcare can be reduced as shown by the changes in public policy recommended below.

Where the students learn:

- Obtain and ensure the use of an Asthma Action Plan for all students with asthma.
- Establish standard emergency protocols and educate all school personnel about asthma.
- Develop and implement statewide indoor air quality management plans that address dampness, mold contamination, maintenance and repairs, cleaning, integrated pest management and other factors, as detailed in the "EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools."
- Create bus idling regulations to reduce outdoor pollution.
- Ensure students with asthma have immediate access to quick-relief medications.
- Require schools, school grounds and facilities, as well as school vehicles and school-sponsored events be 100% tobacco-free.
- Require use of an integrated pest management plan in school settings.

Where the patient lives:

- Require use of an integrated pest management plan in multi-unit, low income housing.

Where the patient seeks healthcare:

- Provide proven incentive programs for the delivery of evidence-based care.
- Develop and provide "Asthma Action Plans" for all patients.
- Provide self-management education, including home-based environmental assessment and remediation, for high risk patients and those whose asthma is not under control.

Louisiana Asthma Surveillance Collaborative
www.asthma.dhh.louisiana.gov