

# Death rate for children with asthma is rising

April 5 2012, By Justin Norrie

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Parents of children with asthma are urged to be more vigilant. Credit: AAP/Simon Renilson

Health experts have warned parents of children with asthma to take the condition more seriously as new data reveals that in recent years asthma-related deaths among people under 15 have increased for the first time.

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics' figures show that there were 17 deaths in 2009/10 compared with seven deaths in 2005/06.

“This is the first time we have seen an increase in asthma-related deaths

among children. It's deeply concerning and should be a major wake-up call for parents," said National Asthma Council Australia Chair, Noela Whitby.

"It's imperative that parents and carers of children with asthma take the necessary steps to ensure their child's condition is controlled by implementing an ongoing asthma management program and following their doctor's advice," Dr. Whitby said.

More than two million Australians have asthma – one of the highest per capita rates in the world.

While the overall [death](#) toll has decreased sharply from a peak of 964 deaths in 1989 to 416 in 2010, Dr. Whitby said the recent rise in asthma deaths in children could be a sign [parents](#) are becoming too complacent.

However Guy Marks, a respiratory physician and Head of Epidemiology Group at the University of Sydney's Woolcock Institute, said that little could be read into figures collected over such a short period.

"Overall, deaths attributed to asthma have been stable, around 400 per year, for several years now," Dr. Marks said. "Deaths due asthma in [children](#) are, fortunately, rare. It is difficult to draw any inferences based on change from one year to the next. Trends over several years are more informative.

"Although there have been important gains in reducing deaths and hospitalisations due to asthma over the last two decades, it is important to remain vigilant. In most people with asthma, the disease can be well controlled with effective treatment.

"The main threat to individuals with troublesome [asthma](#) is the failure to regularly use these effective medications."

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Citation: Death rate for children with asthma is rising (2012, April 5) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-death-children-asthma-isrising.html>

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