

Asthma cases continue to rise in U.S., affecting millions

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Latest numbers from the CDC find 19 million adults and 7 million kids have the illness today.

(HealthDay) -- Asthma continues to take its toll on Americans, with almost 19 million adults (8.2 percent) suffering from the disorder in 2010, according to a report released Tuesday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The [CDC](#) analysis also found that more than 29 million (almost 13 percent) of adults have been diagnosed with the illness at some point in their lifetime.

Children are also being hit hard by the wheezing and discomfort of asthma. According to the report, in 2010 about 10 million children had been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetime and 7 million (9.4 percent)

still had asthma.

Rates of asthma are rising, not falling, the experts noted. From 2001 to 2010, the proportion of people with asthma increased by almost 15 percent. And by 2009, asthma accounted for nearly 3,400 deaths, nearly 480,000 hospitalizations, 1.9 million emergency department visits, and 8.9 million physician office visits.

One expert not connected to the report was not surprised by the findings.

"This study highlights the tremendous problem asthma continues to be in the United States," said Dr. Jonathan Ilowite, associate chief of pulmonary and [critical care](#) at Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, N.Y. "It is the most common reason for children to miss school, and an important cause of missed work in adults. Although the [mortality](#) from the disease has been decreasing, [asthma] still causes over 3,000 deaths in this country a year, and the costs for [medical care](#), lost work and school, and [premature deaths](#) are staggering."

The new statistics bear that out. In 2008, for example, adults who were currently employed and had one or more asthma attacks during the previous 12 months missed 14.2 million days of work due to asthma, the CDC said. Children aged 5 to 17 who had one or more [asthma attacks](#) in the previous 12 months missed a total of 10.5 million days of school that year.

The total estimated societal cost of asthma in 2007 was \$56 billion (2009 dollars), including medical expenses (\$50.1 billion), missed school or work days (\$3.8 billion) and premature death (\$2.1 billion), the report said.

The findings are based on state-by-state data gathered using the Asthma Call-back Survey, which is conducted among people with asthma

identified by the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

"The information in this release is a stark reminder that asthma continues to be major public health concern with a large financial impact on families, the nation and our health care system," Christopher Portier, director of CDC's National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, said in an agency news release.

Individual patients, their families and doctors can help mitigate the suffering, however.

"A key component for adults and children is to create and follow an asthma action plan. Significantly, this analysis reveals that more than half of all children and more than two-thirds of all adults with asthma do not have an individualized action plan. CDC encourages those with asthma to work with their doctors to take control of this disease," Portier said.

May is National Asthma Awareness Month. [Asthma](#) is one of the most common lifelong chronic diseases. It causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more about [asthma](#).

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