

ASTHMA

An estimated 12% of children ages 0-17 years in Georgia have asthma. Among children with asthma, hospitalization rates are highest for those ages four and under.

GEORGIA ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM

The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) established the Georgia Asthma Control Program (GACP) (formerly Georgia Addressing Asthma from a State Perspective) with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2001.

GEORGIA ASTHMA ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Georgia Asthma Advisory Council (GAAC) is a collaborative group of medical and public health professionals, business and government agency leaders, community activists, and others dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma through information-sharing, networking, and advocacy. A robust and active coalition, GAAC has members from over 20 organizations from all corners of the state. Because asthma is controllable but not curable, efforts are focused on secondary and tertiary prevention. Activities are focused on five main objectives:

- Maintain a comprehensive surveillance system in Georgia by using data to track patterns and trends related to prevalence, burden, and risks
- Increase awareness and knowledge of the public and community regarding asthma-related issues
- Identify training needs and opportunities to improve knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices regarding asthma
- Increase knowledge and improve the ability of patients and families to self-manage their asthma
- Increase awareness and management techniques among disparate populations

INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Certification and Training

The Georgia Asthma Program has funded individuals to become Certified Asthma Educators. GACP continuously seeks to train individuals to recognize the signs and symptoms of asthma and to identify triggers and make necessary environmental changes to reduce asthma attacks.

Healthcare Provider Education

Under contract with the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians (GAFF), a state asthma program partner, physicians are learning ways to better manage their asthma patients. They are able to track treatment and care for their asthma patients. Systems are in place for physicians to self-monitor the quality of care given to asthma patients who access their facility.

Georgia Association of School Nurses (GASN)

A statewide GASN Asthma Task Force is being created to promote the use of written asthma action plans and to give students immediate access to their medications. The Task Force will also work to improve asthma case-management and to promote appropriate provider and insurance provider referrals.

Through the active endorsement of school nurses within school systems across the state GASN has also committed to and begun promotion of the passage of three critical school environment policies:

- *100% Tobacco Free School*
- *Asthma Friendly School Initiative*
- *No Idling Policy*

CHILDREN: Asthma Management (con't)

- Fifty eight percent (**58%**) of children with asthma have never been given an asthma action plan by a doctor or other health professional
- Seventy nine percent (**79%**) of children with asthma were taught by a doctor or health professional to recognize early signs of an asthma episode
- Seventy six percent (**76%**) of children with asthma were taught by a doctor or health professional what to do during an asthma attack

ADULTS: Asthma Management

- Thirty eight percent (**38%**) of adults with asthma reported having an episode of asthma or an asthma attack in the past year
- Eleven percent (**11%**) of adults with asthma reported having to visit an emergency room or urgent care center because of their asthma in the past year
- Forty five percent (**45%**) of adults with asthma reported being unable to work or carry out usual activities on one or more days in the past year
- Twenty nine percent (**29%**) of adults with asthma reported having no routine checkups for their asthma in the past year
- Seventy two percent (**72%**) of adults with asthma reported never being given an asthma action plan by a doctor or other health professional
- Fifty seven percent (**57%**) of adults with asthma reported never being taught by a doctor or health professional to recognize early signs of an asthma attack
- Sixty three percent (**63%**) of adults with asthma reported being taught by a doctor or health professional what to do during an asthma attack

ASTHMA PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Know the common triggers

Exposure to the following environmental irritants and allergens can cause an asthma attack:

- Tobacco smoke
- Dust mites
- Pets (animal dander)
- Cockroaches
- Fungi and molds (indoor and outdoor)

Take control of asthma

- Reduce exposure to your triggers
- Work with your doctor to create an asthma management plan
- Monitor your breathing and airways with a peak flow meter, as recommended by your doctor
- Treat symptoms early
- Learn when to seek medical help

Create an asthma management plan

An asthma management plan is a written guide set up by your doctor and you to help manage your asthma, based on your individual needs.

Your plan will tell you:

- What brings on your asthma symptoms
- How to avoid triggers and reduce exposure
- What medicines to take and when to take them
- When you need to seek medical help

Tips for using an asthma management plan:

- Go over each step of the plan with your doctor
- Understand instructions for medications
- Learn to use equipment, such as nebulizers, properly
- Schedule routine visits to discuss your asthma with your doctor.
- Let your doctor know if your plan is not working, so that the plan can be revised as needed

YOUTH EDUCATION

The American Lung Association of Georgia (ALA-GA) provide an Asthma 101 program to parents, educators and school nurses. The program included disease overview, discussion of triggers, warning signs, medications and their effects, and available treatment to improve the knowledge of healthcare professionals and caregivers.

The Asthma Program has contracted with ALA-GA to provide the Open Airways for Schools curriculum to middle schools, to increase

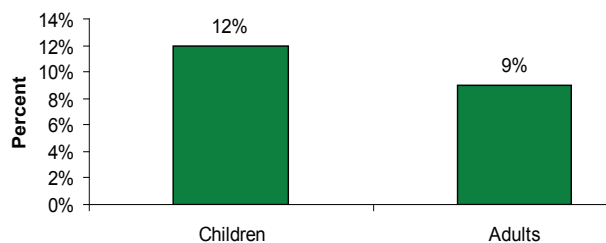
WHAT IS ASTHMA?

- Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the lungs and airways that causes recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing.

ASTHMA PREVALENCE

- Approximately 297,000 (**12%**) children ages 0-17 years have asthma in Georgia
- Approximately 600,000 (**9%**) adults in Georgia have asthma
- Asthma is more common among adult women (**11%**) than adult men (**6%**)
- Adults with higher education and income are **less** likely to be affected by asthma than adults with lower education and income

Percentage of children and adults who have asthma, Georgia, 2008



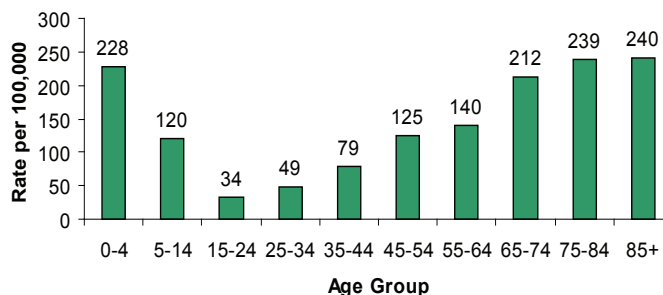
EMERGENCY ROOM (ER) VISITS

- More than **54,000** ER visits for asthma occurred in Georgia in 2007
- The overall age-adjusted rate of ER visits due to asthma was **560** per 100,000 persons in 2007
- Children ages 0 to 4 had the **highest** rate for asthma-related ER visits at **1,428** per 100,000 persons
- The rate of asthma-related ER visits **decreased** as age increased
- ER charges related to asthma totaled over **\$63 million**

HOSPITALIZATIONS

- More than **10,000** hospitalizations for asthma occurred in Georgia in 2007
- Asthma hospitalization rates were **highest** among young children and older adults
- Blacks were **twice** as likely as whites to be hospitalized with asthma
- Hospitalization charges related to asthma totaled more than **\$132 million** in 2007

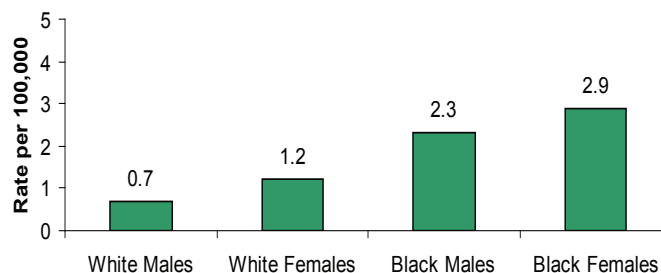
Asthma hospitalizations by age group, Georgia, 2007



DEATHS

- On average, from 2001 to 2007 there were **113** asthma deaths per year
- Blacks were **2.7** times more likely than whites to die from asthma
- Women were **1.5** times more likely than men to die from asthma
- Death rates from asthma **increased** with age

Asthma age-adjusted death rates, by race and sex, Georgia, 2001-2007



CHILDREN: Asthma Management and Training

- Thirty eight percent (**38%**) of children with asthma in Georgia had an asthma attack in the past year
- Fourteen percent (**14%**) of children with asthma had to visit an emergency room or urgent care center because of their asthma in the past year
- Thirty six percent (**36%**) of children with asthma were allowed to have asthma medicine at school. (Georgia code [OCGA 20-2-774 \(2004\)](#)). A statute authorizing students to self administer asthma medication, pursuant to local adopted school policies.)

YOUTH EDUCATION (con't)

knowledge in children with asthma, leading to better understanding and asthma self-management so they can lead normal lives.

Additionally, the Asthma Program has provided scholarships for the disparate and indigent populations to attend Camp Breathe Easy, which offers a residential pediatric asthma program. This allows children with moderate to persistent asthma who require daily medication to participate in a broad range of camp activities that may not be available to them at traditional residential camps.

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

World Asthma Day is organized by the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA), in collaboration with health care groups and asthma educators, to raise awareness about asthma and improve asthma care throughout the world.

Each year GINA chooses a theme and organizes preparation and distribution of World Asthma Day materials and resources.

DCH partners with agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), American Lung Association of Georgia (ALA-GA), and other community organizations to provide educational activities for children in elementary schools, particularly schools in minority communities.

Local communities throughout the state of Georgia who receive special funding from DCH also implement asthma interventions during World Asthma Month.

SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICTS

The state Asthma Program awards one-year special project funds to multiple Georgia public health districts and coalitions. This funding enables local health districts to conduct interventions and implement asthma prevention strategies to serve communities that are disproportionately affected by asthma. These funds also help establish partnerships between the state asthma program and local asthma

coalitions to develop innovative, model programs for improving asthma care.

GACP/TUPP PARTNERSHIP

The Georgia Asthma Program has partnered with the Tobacco Use Prevention Program (TUPP) to address smoking cessation and secondhand smoke issues as they relate to asthma.

Collaboration with local coalitions, associations, environmental groups, and health and safety groups will help improve the quality of life for people with asthma and all Georgians.

ASTHMA ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Over the years, GACP's advocacy efforts have played an integral role in:

- Recognizing May as National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
- Encouraging passage of law SB 472, requiring schools to allow children to carry asthma inhalers while on school grounds
- Promoting national guidelines for the diagnosis and management of asthma and allergies
- Adhering to national standards to improve quality of care for patients
- Working with our partners to strengthen laws that protect patients' rights

Data sources:

1. 2008 Georgia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (<http://health.state.ga.us/epi/brfss/publications.asp>).
2. 2007 Georgia Vital Statistics
3. 2007 Georgia Emergency Department and Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data
4. 2008 Georgia Child Asthma Callback Survey
5. 2008 Georgia Adult Asthma Callback Survey

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Visit <http://www.health.state.ga.us/epi/cdiee/asthma.asp> for more information about asthma in Georgia.