



State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Report Finds Progress in Decreasing Asthma Burden**

A new state report shows progress in reducing the burden of asthma in Wisconsin, although some racial and ethnic groups are still disproportionately affected.

“The good news for Wisconsin is that despite an increase in asthma prevalence over the last several years, Wisconsin has made progress in decreasing the burden of asthma,” said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer. “However, asthma remains an important, statewide public health issue.”

The report, *Burden of Asthma in Wisconsin, 2007*, summarizes a variety of data on asthma including prevalence, associated costs, disease management, emergency department visit and hospitalization rates, and information about the number of deaths due to asthma.

Highlights of the report include:

- Overall, Wisconsin’s asthma prevalence, hospitalization, emergency department and mortality rates are lower than national estimates.
- The prevalence of asthma has climbed to a high of 13 percent in Wisconsin adults and children, however statewide rates of hospitalizations, emergency department visits and death due to asthma have remained unchanged or have decreased slightly.
- Among African Americans in Wisconsin, both adults and public school children have asthma prevalence rates nearly twice as high as for whites. African Americans also have significantly higher rates for hospitalizations, emergency department visits and mortality due to asthma in comparison to whites. Milwaukee County, which has the highest proportion of African Americans in Wisconsin, has the second-highest hospitalization rate and the highest emergency department visit rate for asthma.
- Menominee County, which is largely composed of Menominee Tribe members, has the third-highest hospitalization rate and the second-highest emergency department visit rate for asthma.

Limiting exposure to asthma triggers is an important part of managing asthma, and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke has been identified as both a cause of asthma in children and an asthma trigger. Wisconsin public school children who are continuously exposed to environmental tobacco smoke report higher rates of asthma.

Individuals with asthma can take steps to help manage their asthma by doing the following:

- avoiding exposure to environmental tobacco smoke,
- seeing a primary care doctor regularly,
- taking the medication they receive from their health care providers,
- having a plan to deal with asthma emergencies, and;
- receiving an annual flu shot.

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“While the health impacts of asthma are the primary motivation for public health action, poorly-managed asthma takes a financial toll as well,” Johnson said. “In 2005, total cost for asthma-related hospitalizations and emergency department visits exceeded \$62.8 million. Better asthma management can help reduce these costs.”

A full copy of the recently released asthma surveillance report, *The Burden of Asthma in Wisconsin, 2007* is available at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/eh/Asthma/index.htm>.

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