FACT SHEET: ASTHMA IN NEW JERSEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

About asthma
- Asthma is a serious and chronic disease that is marked by inflammation and bronchoconstriction in the airways.
- Symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing and chest tightness.
- Asthma symptoms can be triggered by:
  - smoke (tobacco and other types), allergies, illness, acid reflux, exercise, some medications, unvented gas appliances, strong odors, air pollution or weather conditions, some foods, and strong emotions,
  - allergens from dust or dust mites, cockroaches, rodents, pets, mold, pollen, or grass.
- Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.
- Uncontrolled asthma can lead to emergency department visits, hospitalization and even death.

Asthma prevalence among New Jersey children aged 5-12
- About 11.9% of New Jersey children aged 5-12 have asthma.¹
- About 7.8% of white, non-Hispanic New Jersey children aged 5-12 have asthma, less than either Black children (17.4%) or Hispanic children (15.9%).
- New Jersey children aged 5-12 from families with household incomes below $35,000 per year are more likely to have asthma (17.8%) than children from families with incomes of $75,000 or more per year (7.7%).

Treatment of asthma in New Jersey children aged 5-12
- Only about 56% of New Jersey children aged 5-12 with current asthma have been given an asthma treatment plan or asthma action plan (a written plan to help control asthma) by a health professional.
- About 64% of New Jersey children aged 5-12 with current asthma use prescription medication for their asthma. Of these, almost 52% use long-term control medications designed to be taken daily to maintain control of asthma symptoms and about 58% use quick relief medications, used to provide fast relief for acute asthma symptoms. About 45% use both types of medications.
- Only about 57% of New Jersey children aged 5-12 with current asthma who are using inhaled quick relief medications use the medications correctly (incorrect usage would be taking it on a schedule rather than for an attack, or taking it before exercise if it was not designed for that purpose).
Effects of asthma on New Jersey children aged 5-12

- There are racial and ethnic disparities in asthma hospitalization and ED visit rates among children 5-12 years, as shown in the following figures. Black, non-Hispanic children continue to have the highest rates when compared to white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic children.

- Nearly 19% of New Jersey children aged 5-12 with current asthma had an ED visit in the past year. About 43% had an urgent doctor visit because of asthma symptoms.
- About 65% of New Jersey children age 5-12 with current asthma experience some activity limitation due to their asthma symptoms.
- Only about 27% of New Jersey children age 5-12 have well-controlled asthma. Well-controlled means symptoms on eight or fewer of the previous 30 days, difficulty sleeping on two or fewer of the previous 30 days, and no limitation of usual activities due to asthma in the past year.
- About 24% of New Jersey children age 5-12 with current asthma missed 1-3 days of school due to their asthma in the past year, while nearly 37% missed 4 or more days.

For more information:
New Jersey Asthma Awareness and Education Program: [www.nj.gov/health/asthma](http://www.nj.gov/health/asthma)
Pediatric Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ): [www.pacnj.org](http://www.pacnj.org)
Notes:
1. This is the percentage of children aged 5-12 where the adult respondent reports that the child currently has asthma. An additional 4.7% of children aged 5-12 have some history of asthma. Information about treatments and symptoms is only collected for the children who currently have asthma.

References:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Asthma Call-back Survey Data, 2008-2010. [http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/ACBS.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/ACBS.htm) (source for discussions on asthma treatment, survey data on ER and urgent doctor visits, activity limitations and asthma control)
- New Jersey Hospital Patient Discharge Data: [http://www.state.nj.us/health/healthcarequality/ub/ub92intro.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/health/healthcarequality/ub/ub92intro.shtml) (source for hospitalizations and emergency department visits)

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