FACT SHEET: ASTHMA IN NEW JERSEY PRESCHOOL-AGE 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 0-4**

- About 5.67% of New Jersey children aged 0-4 have asthma.¹
- White, non-Hispanic preschool children are less likely to have asthma than either Black, non-Hispanic or Hispanic preschoolers in New Jersey (about 4% vs. about 9%).
- New Jersey preschoolers in households with less than $20,000 in annual income were more likely to have asthma than those from higher income households (about 15% vs. about 5%).

**Treatment of asthma in New Jersey children aged 0-4**

- About 37% of New Jersey preschool aged children with asthma have been given an asthma treatment plan or asthma action plan (a written plan to help control asthma) by a health professional.
- About 67% of New Jersey preschool aged children with asthma use prescription medication for their asthma. About 45% use long-term control medications designed to be taken daily to maintain control of asthma symptoms and about 60% use quick relief medications, used to provide fast relief for acute asthma symptoms. About 38% use both types of medications.

**Effects of asthma on New Jersey children aged 0-4**

- New Jersey children 0-4 were more likely to be hospitalized (2001-2011) or to have an emergency department (ED) visit for asthma (2004-2011) than any other age group.
- There are racial and ethnic disparities in hospitalizations and ED visits, as shown in the following figures. Black, non-Hispanic children aged 0-4 have the highest rates of asthma hospitalization and ED visits when compared to white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic children.
About 22% of New Jersey children aged 0-4 with asthma had an ED visit in the past year. Nearly 30% have an urgent doctor visit because of asthma symptoms.

About 44% of New Jersey children aged 0-4 with asthma experience activity limitation due to their asthma symptoms.

About 47% of New Jersey children aged 0-4 with asthma have well-controlled asthma. Well-controlled asthma means symptoms on eight or fewer days out of the previous 30 days, difficulty sleeping on two or fewer nights out of the previous 30 days, and no limitation of usual activities due to asthma in the past year.

For more information:
New Jersey Asthma Awareness and Education Program: www.nj.gov/health/asthma
Pediatric Adult Asthma Coalition of New Jersey (PACNJ): www.pacnj.org

Notes:
1. This is the percentage of children where the adult respondent reports that the child currently has asthma. An additional 1.9% of children 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; source of information on child is the adult answering the survey)

- New Jersey Uniform Billing (UB) 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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