

13. Asthma

What It Is

The incidence of serious asthma attacks is measured by the number of asthma related hospitalizations per 10,000 persons in the general population and in specific age groups.

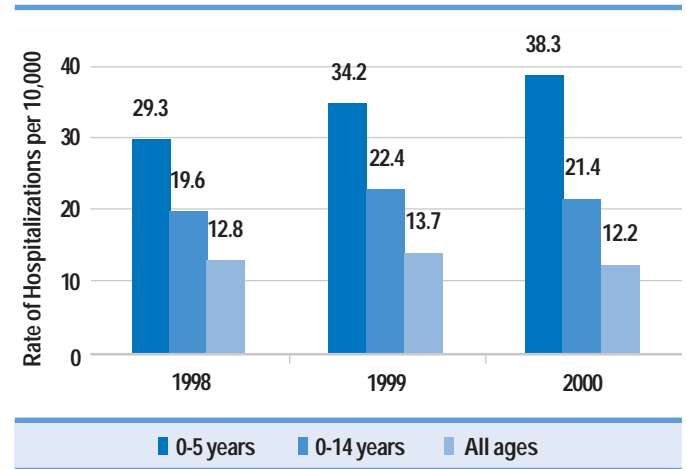
Why It Is Important

Asthma is a chronic respiratory condition greatly increasing in prevalence nationwide. Experts disagree on the causes of the increase in the incidence of asthma. Homeless children and children in crowded, inner-city environments are particularly susceptible to asthma. Incidence is also on the rise among children in suburban environments. Fortunately, asthma can be successfully controlled with medical supervision and treatment. However, children who do not have access to adequate health care resources are likely to experience repeated serious episodes, trips to the emergency room, and absences from school.

How We Are Doing

While preliminary data indicates that asthma hospitalizations rates among the general population decreased between 1998 and 2000, children age five and under were more than three times as likely to be hospitalized for asthma than the general population in 2000. Hospitalization data only reflects the most serious incidents of asthma. Many more children have asthma and are not hospitalized. Data from the California Health Information Survey (CHIS) indicated that in 2001, 13.0% of children ages 0 to 14 were diagnosed with asthma by a physician and also reported symptoms in the previous 12 months. There do not appear to be any techniques or methods available for earlier asthma detection and treatment.

Figure 13.1 — Contra Costa County Rate of Hospitalizations Due to Asthma



Source: California Department of Health Services, Environmental Health Investigations Branch, 2003.

Note: Asthma hospitalization data for 1998-2000 is preliminary.