

West Virginia Health Statistics Center Child Asthma Survey Enables Development of State Asthma Plan

Good data can lead to meaningful plans for action. Physicians are critical partners when it comes to actions that will make a difference in addressing the burden of asthma on our citizens. Asthma is a serious, sometimes life-threatening respiratory disease that affects the quality of life for millions of Americans. According to the 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), an estimated 9.6% (138,000) of adults and 11.5% (43,000) of children in West Virginia currently have asthma.

The West Virginia Health Statistics Center (HSC), in collaboration with the CDC, maintains the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a state-based system of health surveys that collects information on health risk behaviors and health conditions. In the past, only limited data on asthma in adults aged 18 years and older have been available through BRFSS. In order to increase the data available on asthma, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) converted the National Asthma Survey to a call-back survey administered nationally as part of BRFSS in 2005. HSC began conducting the BRFSS Adult and Child Asthma Follow-up Surveys annually in 2007. These surveys better define the burden of asthma in West Virginia by providing new information on asthma, such as demographics, recent asthma history, symptoms and episodes, health care utilization, knowledge of asthma management, modification to environment, medications, costs of care, work/school related asthma, and alternative therapies.

Prior to 2007, the only data available for children with asthma in West Virginia was the BRFSS Child Prevalence Module. This module only provided prevalence numbers for children with asthma in West Virginia. Using the data available in this new survey, the West Virginia

Asthma Education and Prevention Program (WVAEPP) has developed "A Strategic Plan for Addressing Asthma in West Virginia, 2010-2014" available online at : <http://www.wvasthma.org/AboutTheAEPP/AsthmaStrategicPlan/tabid/1227/Default.aspx>

This plan not only targets reducing the burden of asthma in adults, but also in children. A major goal in this plan is to teach West Virginians with asthma to self-manage symptoms effectively. Data from the 2007 and 2008 BRFSS Child Asthma Call-back Surveys were used for planning interventions that would increase self-management in West Virginians with asthma. Regular visits to a health care professional are essential in asthma control, however only 64% of children with asthma reported visiting their healthcare provider at least twice in the past 12 months. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recommends the use of a spacer/holding chamber

when taking inhaler medication, but in West Virginia only 45% of children reported using a spacer with their inhaler medication. Another recommendation of the NHLBI is annual flu vaccine regardless of asthma severity, however less than half of West Virginia children reported receiving their annual flu vaccine in the past 12 months. This and other data available in the BRFSS Asthma Call-back Surveys can be used to help WVAEPP, physicians, and others determine what is needed to help children with asthma breathe easier in West Virginia.

Additional information on BRFSS and other HSC products and services is available at: www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc/statserv/BRFSS.asp. For more information on asthma in West Virginia you can visit WVAEPP's website at: <http://www.wvasthma.org>.

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