**Asthma fact sheet**

***Fast facts***

* Asthma is one of the most common chronic disorders in childhood, currently affecting an estimated 7.1 million children under 18 years, of which 4.1 million suffered from an asthma attack or episode in 2011.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* The strongest risk factors for developing asthma are inhaled substances and particles that may provoke allergic reactions or irritate the airways.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Asthma is underdiagnosed and undertreated. It creates substantial burden to individuals and families and often restricts individuals’ activities for a lifetime.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Asthma results in 456,000 hospitalizations and 1.75 million emergency room visits annually.[[4]](#footnote-4)

***What is asthma?***

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects some 235 million people[[5]](#footnote-5) currently. The disease is caused by the air passages of the lungs becoming inflamed and narrow, which leads to wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing in individuals.

An “asthma attack” occurs when things that don’t bother most people act as triggers that irritate the airways, which produce extra mucus and swell even more in an attempt to keep the trigger out. The most common triggers include: tobacco smoke, dust mites, outdoor air pollution, cockroach allergen, pets, mold and smoke from burning wood or grass.[[6]](#footnote-6) Every individual with asthma can have a different trigger from those of someone else with the disorder.

While there’s no known cure for asthma, most people with asthma can control their symptoms using medication or staying away from their triggers and live happy and healthy lives.

***Related content from the journal* CHEST**

* [School Endotoxin Exposure and Asthma Morbidity in Inner-city Children](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=2337328&resultClick=3)
* [Asthma: Lifestyle and Home Remedies](http://www.chestnet.org/Foundation/Patient-Education-Resources/Asthma/Lifestyle-and-Home-Remedies)
* [Exploring 'clinical conundrum' of asthma-COPD overlap in nonsmokers with chronic asthma](http://www.chestnet.org/News/Press-Releases/2015/08/AsthmaCOPD)
* [Prostanoids in Asthma and COPD: Actions, Dysregulation, and Therapeutic Opportunities](http://journal.publications.chestnet.org/article.aspx?articleid=2411220&resultClick=3)

***Additional resources***

* [*WHO — Health Topics: Asthma*](http://www.who.int/topics/asthma/en/)
* [*CDC* — *Asthma*](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/)
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey Raw Data, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. World Health Organization: [Asthma](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs307/en/). WHO Media Centre. November 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. World Health Organization: [Asthma](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs307/en/). WHO Media Centre. November 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology. [Asthma Facts.](http://acaai.org/news/facts-statistics/asthma) ACAAI Facts & Statistics 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. World Health Organization: [Asthma](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs307/en/). WHO Media Centre. November 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Common Asthma Triggers.](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html) Learn How to Control Asthma August 20, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)