

Asthma facts

Asthma is a disease of the airways in the lungs that causes inflammation (redness) and swelling. The exact cause is not known and there is currently no cure. Asthma is the most widespread chronic (ongoing) health problem in Australia. A range of programs and services are available to support people with asthma.

Asthma rates in Australia

Asthma rates in Australia are high compared to other countries, with over two million people affected. This includes about one in ten adults and about one in eight or nine children. Evidence suggests that the proportion of people in Australia with asthma has not increased in recent years, after rising steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

More facts about asthma in Australia

Some other facts about asthma in Australia include:

- Asthma is one of the most common reasons for admission to hospital for children.
- Asthma is more common among boys than among girls in primary school age children. However, after the teenage years, more women have asthma than men.
- Asthma is more common among Indigenous Australians, particularly adults, than among other Australians.
- Asthma is less common among Australians who were born in non-English-speaking countries than among other Australians.
- More than eight in 10 people with asthma are affected by allergy.
- People with asthma report poorer general health and quality of life than people without asthma.

Asthma management strategies

Australian governments (federal, state and territory) have made asthma a national health priority. Strategies to monitor and manage asthma in Australia include:

- **Asthma Cycle of Care** – support for GPs to provide best practice asthma care to their patients, including the use of written Asthma Action Plans.
- **First Aid for Asthma** – information about how to obtain prompt medical assistance in an emergency.
- **Asthma Australia** – an association of the eight state-based Asthma Foundations that provides a range of asthma-related programs and activities, and conducts First Aid for Asthma Training. Among others, it delivers two major programs:
 - Asthma Child & Adolescent Program – information and training for staff, pre-school staff, parents and adolescents on asthma management and asthma first aid.
 - Asthma Community Support Program – support and information for people with asthma and their families, focussing on priority groups – older Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people in rural and remote communities.
- **Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring** – monitors and reports on asthma rates and impacts in Australia.
- **National Asthma Council Australia** – works with health professionals to improve health outcomes for people with asthma and provides a range of information for consumers.

Where to get help

- Your doctor

- Your pharmacist
- Your local community health centre
- Asthma Foundation of Victoria Tel. 1800 645 130
- National Asthma Council Australia Tel. 1800 032 495

Things to remember

- Asthma is a big health problem in Australia.
- The exact cause of asthma is not known and there is currently no cure, but symptom control is possible with medication and good management.
- A range of programs and services are available to support Australians with asthma.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

National Asthma Council Australia

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