

## **Asthma Facts**

Asthma is a chronic, obstructive lung disease consisting of airway bronchoconstriction and inflammation that makes breathing difficult. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest tightness, wheezing, and coughing. Serious asthma episodes can be life-threatening if not properly managed.

### **Nationally**

- ◆ Asthma prevalence has risen 75% over the last 10 years.
- ◆ More than 17 million people, including an estimated 5.3 million children under the age of 18, suffer from asthma.
- ◆ Direct health costs are \$9.8 billion, in addition to \$2.6 billion in lost productivity/indirect costs, totaling \$12.4 billion per year.
- ◆ The annual cost of treating asthma in children less than 18 years of age is \$712 million, with \$245 million spent in emergency room visits.
- ◆ Asthma is the third-ranked cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15.
- ◆ Asthma is the first-ranked cause of hospitalization among chronic health conditions, numbering 465,000 in 2000. Emergency room visits numbered 1.8 million in 2000.
- ◆ Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism, accounting for 10 million lost school days, and fourth leading cause of work loss, accounting for 9 million lost workdays.
- ◆ ***Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.***
- ◆ ***Most hospitalization and deaths from asthma can be prevented.***

### **State of California**

- ◆ Approximately 3.04 million (one out of 12.5 people) in California suffer from asthma. (2002 – California Health Information Survey)
- ◆ In 1997, 39,708 adults and 16,705 children were admitted to the hospital in California for asthma.
- ◆ In 1998, the direct health care costs of asthma exceeded \$720 million while indirect costs exceeded \$545 million.
- ◆ The average cost from asthma hospitalizations is approximately \$10,000 for adults and \$6,300 for children.
- ◆ Over 600 people die from asthma each year in California.

### **Fresno County**

- ◆ Fresno County was identified as consistently having the third highest asthma mortality rate in the United States.
- ◆ There were approximately 43,000 pediatric asthma cases reported in Fresno County in 2001, up from 17,400 in 1995, and adult asthma cases exceeded 66,000.
- ◆ Between 1990 and 1999, Fresno Unified School District noted a 156% increase in asthma cases, far exceeding an 18% growth in student enrollment, making it the second most frequently noted medically diagnosed health problem.