

# Low Income Households\* and Asthma

## IN NORTH CAROLINA

### What is Asthma?

- Asthma is a chronic (long-term) lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways.<sup>1</sup>
- Common signs and symptoms of asthma may include wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe), chest tightness, shortness of breath, and coughing.
- For people with asthma, contact with allergens or asthma triggers (like pollen, mold, animal dander, dust mites), secondhand tobacco smoke, air pollution, occupational hazards, exercise, and airway infections may make asthma symptoms worse. When asthma symptoms get intense and/or when there are additional symptoms, an asthma attack may occur.
- Severe asthma attacks may require emergency care, and they can cause death.



### Why is asthma an important health issue for low income households?

In 2011, almost 17% of North Carolina adults in households with annual income less than \$15,000 have current asthma, compared with 5% - 9% for households with annual income of more than \$15,000.<sup>2</sup>



in households with annual income less than \$15,000



in households with annual income of more than \$15,000



In 2011, nearly **17% of adults living in low-income households\*** reported having current asthma.<sup>2</sup>

\*Household incomes of less than \$15,000/year.

## What can you do to control your asthma?<sup>3-5</sup>

- Make an asthma action plan with your healthcare provider—the action plan looks at what triggers or brings on your asthma. It should include your daily medicine needs and rescue medicines for quick relief during an attack. If members of your household, such as children or elderly, are cared for by others, be sure each caregiver has a copy of the action plan and understands how to use it.
- Give the right amount of medicine everyday – Ask your doctor if you have questions. Ask your healthcare provider or insurance company about medication financial assistance, if needed.
- Learn what may trigger your asthma and take action(s) in reducing those triggers. Work with landlords to ensure living spaces are free of mold, allergens, and secondhand smoke. (For more information on how to work with landlords, visit the National Center for Healthy Housing website at [www.nchh.org](http://www.nchh.org).)
- Participate in an asthma self-management class.

## Where can I find more information about asthma?

- North Carolina Asthma Program:  
[www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov)  
or call (919) 707-5213
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/asthma](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma)
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute:  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/)
- American Lung Association:  
[www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/](http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/)
- Environmental Protection Agency:  
[www.epa.gov/iaq/iaqhouse.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/iaqhouse.html)

### SOURCES:

- <sup>1</sup> National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. What is Asthma? (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/>). Accessed June 27, 2013.
- <sup>2</sup> North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2011)
- <sup>3</sup> National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. So You Have Asthma ([http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have\\_asthma.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have_asthma.pdf)). Accessed June 13, 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> American Lung Association. Taking Control of Asthma (<http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/taking-control-of-asthma/>). Accessed June 13, 2013.
- <sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Asthma: Flu Shots – Get Vaccinated (<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/flu.html>). Accessed June 13, 2013.



State of North Carolina | Pat McCrory, Governor  
Department of Health and Human Services | Aldona Z. Wos, M.D., Secretary  
Division of Public Health | [www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)  
N.C. DHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. Rev. 4/14