

# Women 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 women?

- Women\* are more likely than men\* to have asthma. In North Carolina, nearly two times as many women as men had current asthma in 2011 (11.6% of women vs. 5.9 of men).<sup>2</sup>



- Women are more likely than men to be hospitalized for asthma. In North Carolina in 2011, the asthma hospitalization rate was 12.5 per 10,000 population for women, compared to 7.8 per 10,000 for men.<sup>3</sup>
- Women have a higher asthma death rate. In North Carolina in 2011, there were 64 deaths among women versus 35 for men.<sup>4</sup>

\*Age 18 and older





In 2011, **1 in 9**  
**women** in North Carolina  
reported having  
current asthma.<sup>2</sup>

## What can you do to control your asthma?<sup>5-7</sup>

- Work with your doctor or other healthcare provider to learn how to manage your asthma.
- Get a written asthma Action plan from your doctor. Make sure you understand it and have it updated at least once a year.
- Learn which medicines you should take and when you should take each of them.
- Identify the things that bring on your asthma symptoms – know your asthma triggers.
- Learn how to monitor your asthma and to recognize and respond quickly to warning signs of an attack.
- Participate in an asthma self-management class.
- Get a flu shot every year (available in the fall), especially if you are or will be pregnant during the flu season.

## 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> North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Asthma Hospitalization Data, 2011.
- <sup>4</sup> North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Asthma Mortality Data, 2011.
- <sup>5</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 October 24, 2012.
- <sup>6</sup> American Lung Association. Taking Control of Asthma (<http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/taking-control-of-asthma/>). Accessed October 22, 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Asthma: Flu Shots – Get Vaccinated (<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/flu.html>). Accessed October 22, 2012.



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