

# Asthma in the Black Community



Asthma is a chronic condition that affects the airways in the lungs. Black people in the United States have a greater asthma burden than others. Here's what to know—and what to do to manage the condition if you have it.

## IS ASTHMA COMMON AMONG BLACK PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES?

Black people have the highest rates of asthma of any U.S. racial or ethnic group. They also are more likely to experience serious complications from the condition. This includes needing to go to the emergency room (ER) for an asthma attack, which can be a sign that asthma is not well controlled.

## WHY IS THE ASTHMA BURDEN GREATER IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY?

Getting and keeping asthma under control is often more challenging for Black people, in part because of long-standing differences in opportunities stemming from discrimination. These differences impact where Black people live and work, as well as their access to health care, and they help explain some of the factors that make controlling asthma harder. These factors include:

### BY THE NUMBERS

Black people in the U.S. are **40% more likely** to have asthma than white people.

Black women are **84% more likely** to have asthma than Black men.

Black children are **8x more likely** to die from asthma than white children.



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## WHY IS THE ASTHMA BURDEN GREATER IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY? (continued)

**INDOOR TRIGGERS.** Black people are more likely to live in densely populated or lower-income areas, which can put them at higher risk for asthma. People living in older, lower-income housing may be exposed to potential asthma triggers such as rodents, insects, mold, and other things that can trigger asthma attacks in people who are sensitive to them.

**POLLUTION.** Black people across the country are exposed to more air pollution than white people, no matter the region where they live or their income levels. Air pollution can greatly worsen asthma symptoms.

**GREATER USE OF THE ER FOR ASTHMA CARE.** Not having a primary care doctor or health insurance, as well as mistrust in the medical system, can all contribute to relying on the ER as the main source of care. Although it may be necessary to visit the ER in an asthma emergency, regular monitoring with a healthcare provider can reduce the need to use the ER.

**BIOLOGICAL LINKS.** Some studies suggest that Black people with asthma may experience a particular type of airway inflammation. Working with a trusted healthcare provider can help to keep track of symptoms and find the most effective treatment plan.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO BETTER MANAGE MY ASTHMA?

Here's where to start:

### KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

Problems like coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath are all signs of **asthma**.

### TALK TO A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Together you can create an **asthma action plan** that works for you. This plan will help you:

- Think about the situations when your asthma seems worse. What seems to trigger your symptoms? Talk to a doctor about ways to try to avoid those situations.
- Understand what medications to take and when to take them. The plan should also explain what to do in an emergency.
- Learn to **keep track of your symptoms** between visits to know if your plan is working.

## THE GOOD NEWS?

With the right treatment plan, most people with asthma can lead full and active lives.

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