Asthma is a chronic condition that affects breathing. Anyone can develop asthma, but some groups in the Hispanic/Latino community have especially high rates. Here’s what to know—and what to do to manage the condition if you have it.

IS ASTHMA COMMON AMONG HISPANIC/LATINO PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES?

Overall, Hispanic/Latino people have lower rates of asthma than other U.S. racial and ethnic groups. But that doesn’t tell the whole story. The Hispanic/Latino community in the United States includes people from a wide range of Spanish-speaking backgrounds, and asthma rates among them vary greatly. Puerto Ricans, for example, have among the highest asthma rates in the U.S. But Mexican Americans have a relatively low rate. Age plays a role, too. Hispanic/Latino children are more likely to be hospitalized or even die from asthma compared to white children.
WHY IS THE ASTHMA BURDEN GREATER IN SOME HISPANIC/LATINO COMMUNITIES?

Researchers are still studying the reasons for these differences. They include:

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
More than a third of Hispanic/Latino people say they have no consistent source of medical care. This can make managing a disease like asthma more difficult. Having a trusted healthcare provider who shares the culture or language can make controlling asthma easier.

AIR POLLUTION
Hispanic/Latino people most commonly live in urban areas, where pollution is high and indoor air quality can be hard to control.

WORKPLACE IRRITANTS
Exposure to certain dusts, chemical fumes, and molds can cause asthma to develop. Many Hispanic/Latino people work in construction and agriculture jobs where these irritants can be found.

FAMILY HISTORY
People who have a parent who has asthma have a higher risk of developing the condition.

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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