

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ASTHMA

### *Why is this report significant?*

- The document is Virginia's **first comprehensive asthma data report** and involves a partnership between the Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Education. In addition, the **Lieutenant Governor has joined the effort** to publicize the release of the report.
- The release coincides with National Asthma Awareness Month.
- The report breaks down the number of asthma cases in each of VDH's health districts and **identifies areas with the highest number of people suffering from the disease**. The report **discusses some of the asthma triggers, the cost of the illness, and rates and numbers of hospitalizations and deaths associated with the illness**.

### *How does asthma affect sufferers?*

- Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways. People with asthma may experience **wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and nighttime or early morning coughing**.
- Asthma can affect a person's **ability to participate in physical activities**. However, with proper maintenance, people can lead normal lives and are encouraged to continue their normal routine.
- An asthma sufferer may have to use a device called an **inhaler to control coughing** or maintain comfortable breathing.

### *How many Virginians have been diagnosed with asthma?*

- **In 2004, 412,370 adults and 152,000 children** in Virginia reported having asthma.
- Twenty-two of VDH's 35 health districts had adult asthma rates higher than the 2004 state rate of 7.3 percent for adults.
- The rate of **children suffering from asthma increased** nationwide by an average of 4.3 percent per year from 1980 to 1996. Today asthma accounts for **14 million days of school missed** each year.

(more)

*What are some of the risk factors?*

- Environmental exposure to **mold, second hand smoke, dust mites and cockroach droppings** can trigger asthma. **Genetic factors** can also lead to asthma.
- Behavioral risk factors such as **smoking, stress and obesity** contribute to developing asthma.
- **Running** or some other **vigorous activities** can trigger asthma.

*What are you hoping to accomplish by introducing the report?*

- The report will help inform key stakeholders about asthma in Virginia and be a useful tool that can enable health care providers, policy makers and others to develop effective asthma control programs.

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