

Nine key messages about asthma in Australia

The Woolcock Institute of Medical Research today released nine key messages about asthma in Australia.

Professor Guy Marks, Head of Epidemiology Research, Woolcock Institute said, “Asthma remains a significant health problem in Australia so the key messages are a timely reminder that asthma can be a life threatening disease”.

Nine Key Asthma Messages

- About 2 million Australians have current asthma**
 - One in nine children
 - One in ten adults.
- One in nine children with asthma are exposed to tobacco smoke in their home
- 402 people died due to asthma in 2006, one in four of them aged under 65 years
- People with asthma should have a written asthma action plan but most still don't
(Asthma action plans are written instructions telling patients what to do if their asthma gets worse. An asthma action plan usually includes instructions about when and how the patient should change their medications, and when to access medical care)
- People with asthma are at least as likely to smoke as others are
- In 2004–2005 \$606 million (1.2% of total health-care expenditure) was spent on asthma and over half of it on medication
- There has been a general pattern of decline in deaths due to asthma since the early 1990s
- In recent years the prevalence of asthma has decreased among children and young adults
- Indigenous Australians have more problems with asthma than other Australians
 - 1 ½ times as likely to have current asthma
 - Twice as likely to have hospital visits for asthma
 - Three times as likely to die from asthma

The key messages are based on the recently released AIHW report, *Asthma in Australia 2008**, which was prepared by the Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring (ACAM) and based at the Woolcock Institute. The key messages, together with the main report (now available as an interactive html) and associated slide set, are a valuable resource for those wanting to know more about asthma in Australia and are all available at www.asthmonitoring.org

* The report was funded by the Department of Health and Ageing and prepared by the Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring, a collaborating unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) located at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Sydney.

** Defined as ever being doctor-diagnosed and still having asthma (National Health Survey 2004–05)

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