

BREATHING EASIER *in* PUERTO RICO



SUCCESS STORIES
FROM THE PUERTO RICO
ASTHMA PROJECT

“Asthma is a multifactorial disease and we need to address it from many different components, such as the environment, access to health care, public policy, health promotion and education, partnerships, surveillance, and evaluation. We need a variety of people working toward the same goal: asthma control. Nobody can do this alone.”

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PUERTO RICO ASTHMA PROJECT

All information and data provided
by the Puerto Rico Department of
Health Asthma Project

THE PROBLEMS:

- In 2010, more than 14 percent of Puerto Rico adults had been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetimes, and slightly more than 7 percent of adults reported current asthma. That same year, nearly 22 percent of Puerto Rico children had been diagnosed with asthma at some point in their lives, and nearly 12 percent were living with the chronic respiratory disease.
- Adults with asthma are more likely than those without asthma to report being in “fair” or “poor” health.
- About 40 percent of Puerto Rico residents with asthma visited the emergency room in the previous year due to the disease.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO ASTHMA:

The Puerto Rico Asthma Project and its partners focus on groups with the greatest needs. They increase asthma awareness, educate people on how to avoid environmental asthma triggers, partner with local stakeholders, and help residents manage their own health. And their efforts are paying off.

- Since 2010 and thanks to continuous efforts with asthma partners to improve access to health services, the government health insurance plan no longer deducts the cost for prescribed asthma controller medications and referrals to pulmonologists from physicians’ capitated (fixed) reimbursement. The change was made to avoid the financial burden to physicians when prescribing medications and referring patients to a specialist. Such activities create a system of support for asthma control.
- The Puerto Rico Asthma Project has worked with the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico to provide free, in-person asthma training with continuing medical education credits. Since the effort began in 2006, the training has reached about 2,000 health professionals across Puerto Rico, including doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, health educators, and pharmacists.
- Also in partnership with the University of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Asthma Project trains teachers and school personnel to create asthma-friendly environments. As of spring 2013, the ongoing effort had reached 175 teachers and school staff, who now follow indoor air quality practices and provide educational asthma activities.
- Along with its university partners, the Puerto Rico Asthma Project is working to increase the commonwealth’s ranks of certified asthma educators. A new effort, which began in 2012, recruits health professionals, teachers, and community health workers to take part in two days of classroom and hands-on training. As of spring 2013, 80 additional health and education professionals have been certified.
- In Puerto Rico, asthma results in millions of dollars in health care costs — costs that are largely preventable through an evidence-based, public health approach to asthma control.

CDC’s National Asthma Control Program

Puerto Rico is among 36 states and territories that receive funding and technical support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Asthma Control Program. Since 1999, CDC has been leading public health efforts to prevent costly asthma complications, create asthma-friendly environments, and empower people living with asthma with the tools they need to better manage their own health. **Find out more at** www.cdc.gov/asthma.

