



Physical Health among Florida Adults with Current Asthma

Florida Department of Health

INTRODUCTION

Asthma is a chronic condition that affects approximately 14 million adults in the United States. In 2005, nearly 4,000 Americans died of asthma. The impact of asthma on quality of life is substantial. By learning to manage asthma, people can lead high-quality, productive lives.

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a state-based random telephone survey of non-institutionalized adults, designed to monitor risk behaviors, chronic illness, and access to health care. The BRFSS collects data on asthma by asking respondents if they have been told by a doctor that they currently had asthma. In 2006, Florida BRFSS surveyed 10,726 adults statewide with a response rate of 51.2%. Among the respondents, 872 reported having current asthma. In this report, 2006 data were used with the exception of the section on outdoor air quality, which used 2005 data. In 2005, Florida BRFSS surveyed 8,190 adults statewide with a response rate of 49.4%. BRFSS survey data are adjusted, or “weighted,” so that the resulting estimates can be generalized to all Florida adults.

In this report, the physical health status of people with and without current asthma is compared, and then the focus is on an analysis among adults with current asthma. Data on poor physical health in relation to demographic characteristics, risk factors, frequency of asthma attacks, and measures to prevent asthma symptoms are presented. These data are provided to create a more comprehensive snapshot of the burden of current asthma in Florida. Poor physical health is defined as respondents who reported that their physical health was not good on 14 or more days during the past 30 days. Good physical health is defined as respondents who reported that their physical health was not good on less than 14 days during the past 30 days.

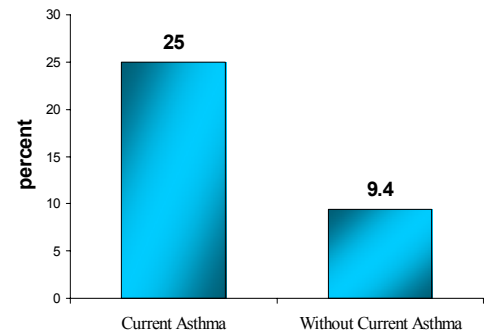
RESULTS

1. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health by Asthma Status (Figure 1)

Adults with current asthma were approximately 2.7 times more likely to have poor physical health than adults who did not have current asthma (25% vs. 9.4%).

On average, adults with current asthma experienced 7.2 days in which their physical health was not good during the past 30 days compared to an average of 3.1 days among adults without current asthma.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health by Asthma Status, Florida, 2006



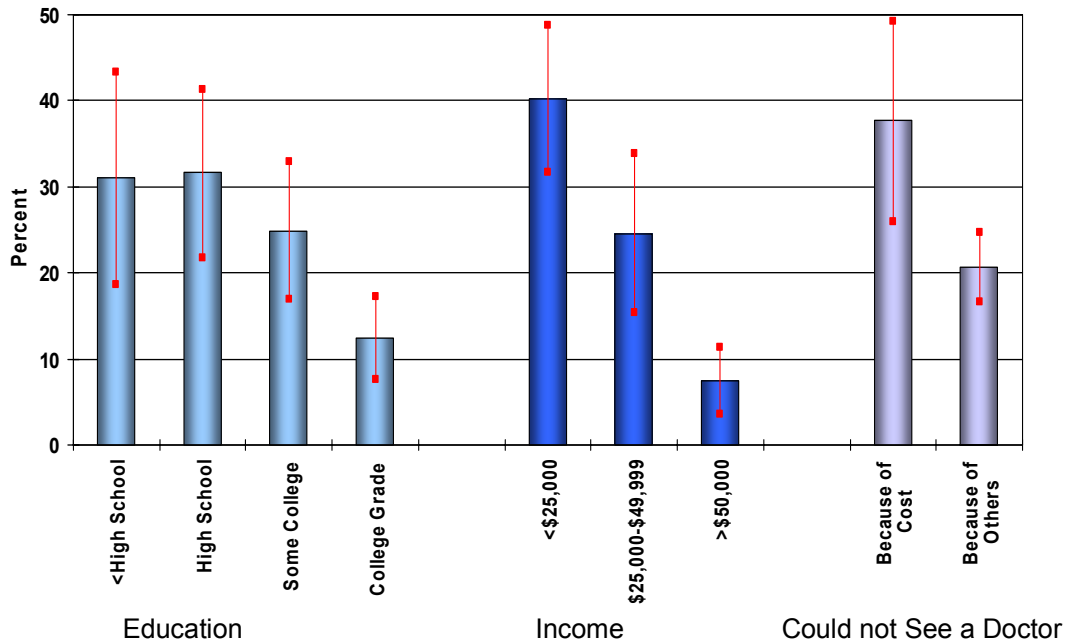
2. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health among People with Current Asthma (Figure 2)

Compared to their counterparts, the prevalence of poor physical health among people with current asthma was higher among:

- Adults who have a high school education or less (31%).
- People whose annual household income is less than \$25,000 (40%).
- Adults who could not see a doctor when needed because of cost (38%).

There were no significant differences in the prevalence of poor physical health among asthmatic adults by sex, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, healthcare coverage, and region.

Figure 2. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health among Adults with Current Asthma, Florida, 2006

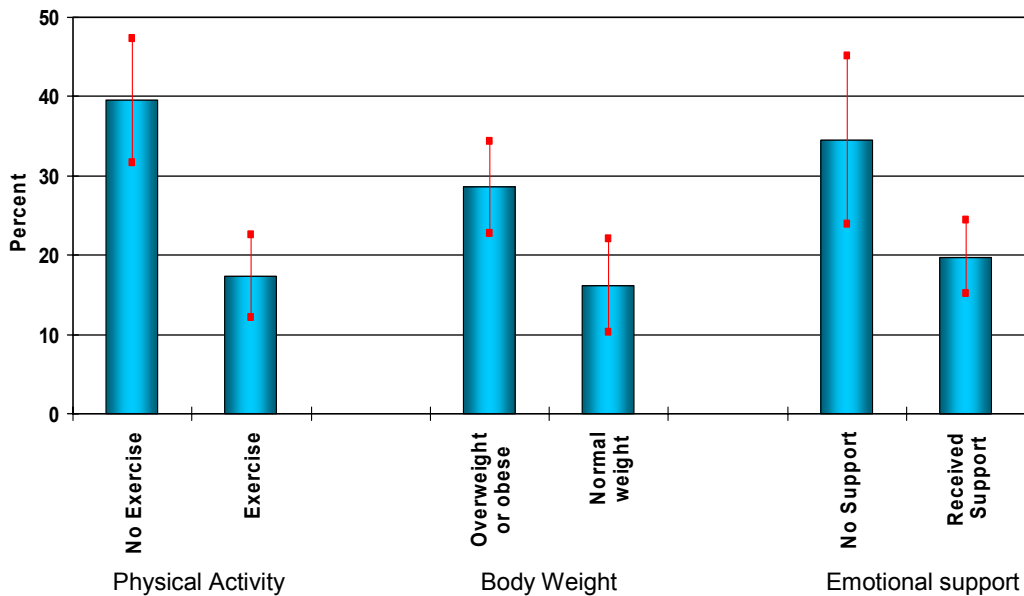


3. Risk Factors and Poor Physical Health among Adults with Current Asthma (Figure 3)

Among people with asthma, the prevalence of poor physical health was higher among:

- Those who did not engage in any exercise or physical activity (40%), than among those who participated in some exercise (17%).
- Adults who were overweight or obese (29%), than among adults who were a normal weight (16%).
- People who did not receive emotional support (35%), than among people who received emotional support (20%).

Figure 3. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health by Risk Factors among People with Current Asthma, Florida, 2006

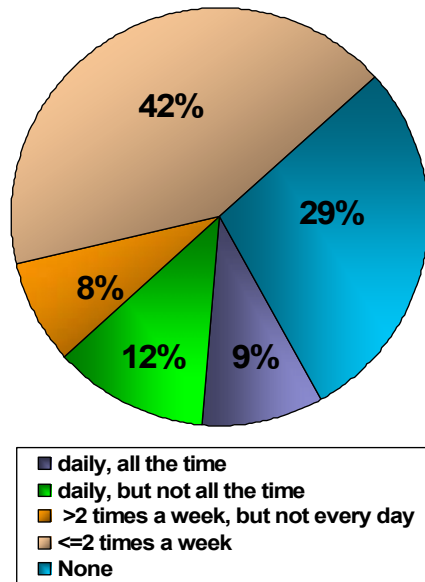


4. Frequency of Asthma Attacks

Approximately 65% of adults with lifetime asthma currently still have asthma. Among adults with current asthma, 21% had asthma symptoms every day, and 50% had asthma symptoms at least once a week during the past 30 days. Symptoms of asthma include cough, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and phlegm production with no cold or respiratory infection. Figure 4 shows the five categories of asthma symptom frequency.

Adults with current asthma who had poor physical health were 2.3 times more likely to have asthma symptoms every day (37% vs.16%) than asthmatic people with good physical health.

Figure 4. Asthma Frequency among Adults with Current Asthma, Florida, 2006



5. Prevention and Management of Asthma

Proper asthma management and avoiding environmental “triggers” can prevent asthma attacks and reduce the needs for urgent medical care. The environmental “triggers” include allergens such as mold, pet dander, cockroaches, and dust mites, or irritants such as tobacco smoke, certain chemicals, and other environmental exposures.

ASTHMA CARE

Among adults with current asthma and those who reported poor physical health:

- Over 44% had seen a health professional for urgent treatment of worsening asthma symptoms in the past 12 months.
- Almost 67% took a prescription asthma medication to prevent an asthma attack from occurring in the past 30 days.
- Over 57% used a prescription asthma inhaler during an asthma attack to stop the attack in the past 30 days.

The prevalence of visiting a healthcare provider for asthma prevention among people who had poor physical health was 1.5 times as high as that among people who had good physical health with current asthma.

SMOKING

People with asthma should not smoke. Asthma can be triggered by secondhand smoke, or the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar. In this report, current smokers are defined as adults who smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their entire life, and smoked cigarettes on either some days or all days.

- In 2006, over one-fourth (27%) of adults with current asthma reported current smoking. The prevalence of current smoking is significantly higher than that among people without current asthma (21%).
- Among people with current asthma, smokers have more frequent asthma attacks than non-smokers (33% vs. 17%). In addition, non-smokers have a significantly higher prevalence of experiencing no symptoms during the past 30 days than smokers (33% vs. 17%).
- There was no significant difference in the percentage of current smokers between asthmatic adults with poor physical health and those with good physical health (32% vs. 25%).

CHANGING OUTDOOR ACTIVITY BASED ON AIR QUALITY

Air quality refers to how clean or how polluted the air is. Air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and trigger attacks. People with asthma should be aware of air quality and avoid exposure to air pollution. Among adults with current asthma and poor physical health:

- Over 34% had been advised by a healthcare professional to reduce their outdoor activity when the air quality is bad.
- Over 44% reduced or changed their outdoor activity because they thought the air quality was bad or was affecting how well they felt in the past 12 months.
- More than 45% had ever heard or read about the air quality index or air quality alerts from local radio, TV, and newspapers.
- Approximately 29% reduced or changed their outdoor activity level based on air quality index or air quality alerts in the past 12 months.

There were no significant differences in these characteristics between asthmatic adults with poor or good physical health.

VACCINATION

People with asthma should receive an influenza shot annually. Adults with asthma were at a high risk of developing complications after contracting the influenza virus, yet in 2006, 63% of current asthmatic adults had not received the flu vaccine in the past 12 months. This prevalence was significantly lower than the overall prevalence of not receiving a flu shot for adults (73%). This prevalence did not differ significantly among asthmatic adults with poor physical health and good physical health (58% vs. 65%).

Table 1: Prevalence of Poor Physical Health among Florida Adults with Current Asthma, 2006

	Prevalence	95 percent C.I.		
Total	24.9	20.5	29.3	
Sex				
Male	20.5	11.9	29.0	
Female	27.6	22.8	32.3	
Race/ethnicity				
NHW	30.0	19.9	30.0	
NHB	28.8	14.3	43.4	
Hispanic	14.9	6.2	23.7	
Age				
18-44	19.7	12.1	27.3	
45-64	30.8	24.3	37.4	
65 +	27.4	20.1	34.6	
Education				*
<High school	31.1	18.7	43.4	
High school	31.6	21.8	41.3	
Some college	24.9	17.0	32.9	
College	12.4	7.6	17.3	
Household Income				*
<\$25,000	40.2	31.7	48.8	
\$25,000-\$49,999	24.6	15.3	33.8	
>\$50,000	7.5	3.6	11.4	
Marital Status				
Married	21.1	15.4	26.8	
Divorced, widowed, separated	31.9	24.8	40.0	
Single	27.7	13.6	41.8	
Healthcare Coverage				
Yes	25.1	20.5	29.6	
No	25.5	13.0	38.0	
Can not see a doctor because of cost				*
Yes	37.7	26.0	49.3	
No	20.6	16.6	24.7	
Region				
Rural	36.7	20.9	50.4	
Urban	24.6	19.9	29.3	

Table2. Prevalence of Poor Physical Health among Florida Adults with Current Asthma by Risk Factors, 2006

	Prevalence	95 percent C.I.		
Exercise				*
No exercise	39.5	31.7	47.3	
Exercise	17.4	12.2	22.6	
Body Weight				*
Overweight or obese	28.6	22.7	34.3	
Normal weight	16.2	10.3	22.1	
Cigarette Smoking				
Current smoking	29.7	19.1	40.2	
Not current smoking	23.2	18.5	27.8	
Receiving Emotional Support				*
No	34.5	23.9	45.2	
Yes	19.7	15.1	24.4	

* P value less than 0.05

Table3. Prevention of Various Characteristics among Current Asthmatic Adults with Poor and with Good Physical Health, FL, 2006 or 2005

	Poor Physical Health			Good Physical Health			
	Percent	95 percent C.I.		Percent	95 percent C.I.		
Symptoms in the last 30 days							
Everyday	36.8	26.6	47.0	15.9	6.0	13.2	*
Sometimes	41.9	32.2	51.7	53.1	30.1	39.3	
None	21.3	13.5	29.1	30.9	25.5	36.4	
Doctors treatment							
Saw a doctor within 12 months	44.4	34.2	54.7	29.2	22.9	35.5	*
Took asthma medication last month	66.6	56.4	76.8	58.6	52.4	64.7	
Took inhaler last month	57.3	47.4	67.2	49.5	43.1	56.0	
Vaccination							
Had a flu shot	57.6	48.2	67.1	65.4	59.4	71.3	
Cigarette smoking							
Current smoking	32.1	22.3	41.9	25.2	18.6	31.8	
Outdoor air quality							
Reduce outdoor activity by their thought	44.3	33.1	55.5	34.4	26.7	42.0	
Ever heard air quality index or alert	45.2	34.3	56.2	46.7	39.0	54.3	
Reduce outdoor activity by air quality alerts	28.8	13.4	44.1	37.2	24.7	49.7	
Doctors ever told to reduce outdoor activity when air quality is bad	34.4	24.0	44.9	25.0	18.6	31.4	

* P value less than 0.05

For more information about the BRFSS, please contact: Ms. Melissa Murray, M.S., BRFSS Coordinator, at (850) 245-4444, Ext. 2445, or by e-mail at Melissa_Murray@doh.state.fl.us. For more information on this report, please contact Ms. Bo (Bonnie) Yu, M.A, M.A.S., Statistician, at (850) 245-4444, Ext. 2407, or by e-mail at Bonnie_Yu@doh.state.fl.us.