

ASTHMA IN CHILDREN



Asthma is one of the most common long-term health problems in children. In Australia, it's the main cause of disease burden for children aged 1 to 9. It can affect how children sleep, play, learn, and enjoy daily life, which makes it a big challenge for both children and their families.

Why asthma is a big deal for children

- 1 It often starts young and lasts a long time**
The first signs of asthma often appear in early childhood, and asthma can last a lifetime. Even if symptoms get better for a while, the lungs can still be sensitive. This means people need to keep managing it as they grow older.
- 2 Currently there's no cure, only control**
Asthma can be well controlled with medicine and avoiding triggers, but currently it can't be completely cured. People need to take care of their asthma to stay healthy.
- 3 It affects daily life**
Asthma can make life harder for children if it's not well managed. Even if it's not dangerous all the time, asthma can cause children to miss school, visit the doctor or even hospital often, and feel anxious or left out. It can affect their learning and emotional health.
- 4 It can be unpredictable**
Even children with mild asthma can suddenly have a serious asthma attack. This can be scary and might stop them from joining in sports or playing outside, which can be hard for the whole family.
- 5 But it doesn't have to stop them**
The good news is that asthma can be controlled. With the right care, children with asthma can still enjoy sports, play with friends, and live a full, active life.
- 6 It affects a lot of children**
Around 386,000 children under 15 have asthma in Australia —that's about 8 out of every 100 children that age. It also has a big effect on the whole community, taking into account hospital visits, medicine costs, and time missed from school or work.

According to the latest **Burden of Disease study**, the most challenging health conditions for children aged 1-9 are asthma, then autism, followed by epilepsy (in children 1-4) or anxiety (in children 5-9).

"Burden of Disease" is a term used to show how much a health problem affects someone's life - both how they feel day to day and how long they live.

ASTHMA IN CHILDREN



ABOUT
386,000

Australians under the age of 15 (8.2%) have asthma^{1,6}
10.1% of boys (1 in 10 boys)
6.2% of girls (1 in 16 girls)

ASTHMA WAS THE LEADING CAUSE

of disease burden in 2024 for children (aged 1-9 years)²

2nd leading cause for older children and adolescents (aged 10-14 years)²



42%

of Australians aged 0-14 with asthma had to take time off school in 2014/15 due to their asthma⁴



HOSPITALS

13,604

children under 15 years of age were hospitalised for asthma in 2023/24³

43%

of all asthma hospitalisations were in children under 15 in 2023/24³



ONLY **2 IN 3**

children (67%) had an Asthma Action Plan in 2022¹



ONLY **1 IN 2**

children (49%) used asthma medication in the last two weeks in 2022¹



EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED)

ABOUT **26,500**

children under 15 visited an ED for asthma in 2021/22⁵



1.6X

Boys under 15 were 1.6 times more likely than girls the same age to go to ED for asthma in 2021/22⁵



For medical advice on how to best treat and manage your asthma, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

To speak with an Asthma Educator, call 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) or visit asthma.org.au

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), National Health Survey 2022: Asthma [Internet, cited 2025 Aug 26]. www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/asthma/latest-release 2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Australian Burden of Disease Study 2024 [Internet, cited 2025 Aug 26]. www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/australian-burden-of-disease-study-2024 3. AIHW, Principal diagnosis data cubes, Separation statistics by principle diagnosis, 2023-24 [Internet, cited 2025 Aug 26]. www.aihw.gov.au/reports/hospitals/principal-diagnosis-data-cubes/contents/summary 4. ABS, Health Service Usage and Health Related Actions Australia 2014-15. www.abs.gov.au 5. AIHW, Asthma [Internet, cited 2025 Aug 26]. www.aihw.gov.au/reports/chronic-respiratory-conditions/asthma 6. AIHW, Health of children [Internet, cited 2025 Aug 26]. www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/health-of-children