

# Influenza and Asthma In West Virginia



## West Virginia Influenza and Asthma Facts

Approximately 177,000 (12%) West Virginia adults have at some point been diagnosed with asthma by a health care professional. In 2009 it was estimated that 126,000 (9%) West Virginia adults currently had asthma.<sup>1</sup>

People with asthma are more likely to have serious health problems from getting the flu.<sup>2</sup>

- Approximately half of the adults with asthma in West Virginia reported receiving an influenza vaccination in the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup>
- An average of 11% of West Virginia residents hospitalized for influenza have an additional diagnosis of asthma at time of discharge.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2008, almost 20% of children under the age of 15 that are hospitalized for influenza have an additional diagnosis of asthma at time of discharge.<sup>3</sup>

## Addressing Asthma In West Virginia

The West Virginia Asthma Education and Prevention Program (WV-AEPP) and our network of partners from the West Virginia Asthma Coalition and the American Lung Association of West Virginia are dedicated to the goal of reducing the burden of asthma to the citizens of our state. If you would like to learn more about our asthma programs, contact WV-AEPP at (304) 558-0644 or [www.wvasthma.org](http://www.wvasthma.org).

### IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAS ASTHMA...

- > **Anyone with asthma is at higher risk for flu-related complications. Along with everyone else, if you have asthma you should:**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing;
  - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder not your bare hands;
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth (germs are spread that way); and
  - Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- > **If you have asthma, you should follow an updated, written Asthma Action Plan, developed with your doctor. Follow this plan for daily treatment and for controlling your asthma symptoms.**
- > **If your child has asthma, make sure that his or her updated, written Asthma Action Plan is on file at school or at the Day Care Center. Be sure that plan and medication are easy to get when needed.**
- > **Everyone with asthma at least 6 months of age and older should get a shot every year to protect against seasonal flu.** Children aged 6 months through 8 years who have never had a seasonal flu shot will need two doses the first time. Children who have had a seasonal flu shot in the past only need one shot. **Persons with asthma should not use the inhaled “FluMist®” vaccine.**
- > **Certain antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight the flu virus by stopping it from growing in your body.** They make you better faster and may prevent serious flu complications. The antiviral drug Tamiflu (also known as oseltamivir) may be prescribed for persons with asthma. **Flu treatments work best if started within two days of when illness starts. This means persons with asthma should talk to their healthcare professional now and plan what to do if they develop a flu-like illness.**
- > **Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye’s syndrome.**

