



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Sixteen percent of Chicago families had a child or children with asthma, which is higher than state and national childhood asthma rates.

Among families who had a child or children with asthma, 24% said their child had visited an emergency room or urgent care center for asthma within the last year.

Parents of children with asthma were less likely to use their local parks than other parents.

Childhood Asthma in Chicago

Nationally, asthma is the third leading cause of preventable hospitalizations for children, and children with asthma miss twice as many school days as other children.¹ Asthma is also the most common serious chronic disease for infants and children.² To examine childhood asthma in Chicago, researchers at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago teamed up with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) on the 2018–19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr. to ask parents from all 77 community areas in Chicago whether their children had asthma. Specifically, we asked parents, “Has your child/Have any of your children ever been told by a doctor or other health professional that he or she has/they have asthma?” If a parent said that their child was ever told he/she/they had asthma, we asked if their child had visited an emergency room or urgent care center because of their asthma in the last year. We also asked parents questions about their families and family health. In this report, “parents who had a child with asthma” refers to parents whose child or children either currently have asthma or have been told they have asthma in the past but do not currently have it.

Childhood Asthma Rates in Chicago

Overall, 16% of Chicago families had a child or children who had ever been diagnosed with asthma. This is higher than state (11%) and national (12%) levels of childhood asthma (Figure 1).³ Parents who had a child with asthma were more likely than other parents to say that they had a child with a special healthcare need (12% vs. 6%) and were more likely to say that they had a child who was in worse health (36% vs. 16%), suggesting that some parents, but not all parents, considered their child’s asthma to be connected to their child’s overall health (Figure 1). However, parents were about equally likely to consider asthma a “big problem” facing child health in Chicago regardless of whether they had a child with asthma or not.

Figure 1. Effects of having a child with asthma among Chicago parents

Prevalence

Proportion of Chicago parents who had a child who had ever been diagnosed with asthma



2 out of 12 Chicago parents had a child with asthma

Emergency Room and/or Urgent Care Center Visits

Proportion of Chicago parents who reported visiting an emergency room or urgent care center in the last year due to their child’s asthma



24%

Parents in Worse Health More Likely to Have an Asthmatic Child

Proportion of Chicago parents who had a child with asthma



■ Parent in worse health
■ Parent in better health

Parents with an Asthmatic Child More Likely to Have a Child in Worse Health

Proportion of Chicago parents who had a child who was in worse health



■ Parents who had a child with asthma
■ Parents who had a child without asthma

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Asthma-Related Emergency Room Visits

Among those families who had a child with asthma, 24% said that their child visited an emergency room or urgent care center because of their asthma in the last year (Figure 1). Asthma-related emergency room or urgent care visits can be critical and provide life-saving treatment for children experiencing an asthma exacerbation or attack. However, asthma-related emergency room visits are also considered one of the most preventable emergency room visits.¹ Asthma-related emergency room visits and exacerbations are reduced when children receive appropriate preventive asthma care.^{4,5} Written asthma action plans, developed by families and their providers, are useful tools to help families understand daily preventive care and symptom management.^{6,7} These plans also help to educate other caregivers about the child's condition.

If your child has asthma, it is important to let their teachers, babysitters and daycare providers know about their condition. One way to do this is with an [Asthma Action Plan](#).

Childhood Asthma and Park Use

Parents with a child or children with asthma were less likely to report using their local parks than parents whose child did not have asthma (70% vs. 80%). This may be because parents try to avoid common asthma triggers such as seasonal allergens, air pollution, cold weather and exercise. However, research has shown that children who live in cities and have asthma experience fewer asthma symptoms if they live in close proximity to a park.⁸

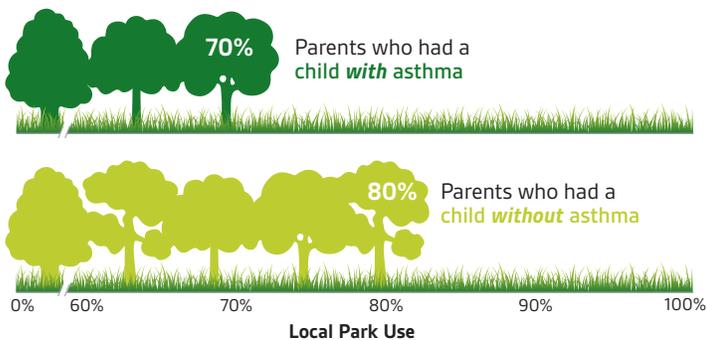


Figure 2. Proportions of Chicago parents who use their local park, by child asthma status

Childhood Asthma in Families

In our survey, the proportion of parents who reported having a child or children with asthma did not differ significantly by parent race, age or education level. However, other research has shown that in Illinois, Non-Latinx Black children are more likely to have current asthma than Non-Latinx White children and Latinx children,⁹ and in Chicago, Non-Latinx Black children are twice as likely to visit the emergency room due to asthma compared with Chicago children overall.¹⁰ Additionally, childhood

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2018-19 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was administered via phone interviews from December 2018 through May 2019. The sample consisted of 2,982 adults in Chicago, 740 of whom were the parent, step-parent or guardian (referred to as "parents" in this report) of at least one child under 18 years old living in the household. The survey cooperation rate was 12%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about health in your community, visit chicagohealthatlas.org.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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asthma prevalence rates have been shown to vary widely by neighborhood in Chicago.¹¹

Our data suggested a trend that families with lower income (e.g., below the federal poverty line, which for a family of four in 2019 was \$25,750) were more likely to have a child with asthma than families with higher income, although this did not reach statistical significance. This trend is consistent with results from the National Survey of Children's Health, which indicated that in Illinois there was a higher rate of current asthma among children living in poverty (18.4%) compared with children in families with higher household income (5–11%).³ When children miss school due to asthma it can result in lost wages for parents, which may be particularly burdensome for lower income families.¹²

Parents who were in worse health themselves were more likely to have a child with asthma compared with other parents (23% vs. 15%, Figure 1). Similarly, parents who had asthma themselves were more likely to have a child with asthma compared with other parents (26% vs. 14%).

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