



Press Release

AAFA Rolls Out National Roadmap to Address Serious Asthma Disparities Impacting Black and Hispanic Americans

Asthma prevalence and mortality remains highest for Black and Puerto Rican Americans; report identifies specific actions for change



Washington D.C., September 16, 2020 — A new, comprehensive report from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) shows stubbornly persistent disparities in asthma for Black and Hispanic Americans. The [*Asthma Disparities in America: A Roadmap to Reducing Burden on Racial and Ethnic Minorities*](#) report examines serious gaps in asthma rates, care and outcomes. The report follows AAFA's *Ethnic Disparities in the Burden and Treatment of Asthma* report from 2005.

While AAFA's 15-year review demonstrates modest improvements in quality of health care overall and asthma disparities beginning to shrink between some racial groups, the U.S. is falling far short in eliminating the problem for Black and Hispanic Americans who experience the most stunning differences. AAFA's latest report lays out specific strategies and tactics for prioritizing policies and programs to improve asthma health for Americans most at risk while dismantling systems that fuel harmful disparities.

"The significance of the timing of this report is not lost on us as the struggles of the world around us closely mirror our findings and objectives. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge and expose what we've found when it comes to asthma: populations of color are disproportionately impacted," said Kenneth Mendez, AAFA's CEO and president. "Racial injustice is being met with a powerful global reawakening that is calling for change. Racism and discrimination touch almost every facet of our lives including health, and it comes as no surprise sharp inequities continue in the community we serve affected by asthma."

Due to health impacts of systemic racism and other structural failures, some key facts of the report show:

- Black and Hispanic Americans continue to have the highest rates of asthma. Hispanics of Puerto Rican descent have the highest rates of asthma compared to any other racial or ethnic group in the United States.
- Black Americans remain three times more likely to die from asthma than white Americans.
- Black patients are five times more likely to be treated for asthma in hospital emergency rooms compared to white patients, a gap that has remained unchanged since 2005.
- More Black women die from asthma than any other group.



- American Indian and Alaska Natives also have some of the highest rates of asthma prevalence, morbidity, and mortality. However, data is thin for tribal nations. AAFA is calling for more immediate investment in research and data collection to help improve outcomes for Indigenous Americans.

“The findings in our *Asthma Disparities in America* report aren’t surprising. Causes of disparities in asthma have been documented for decades and effective interventions have been successfully implemented in various populations,” said Sanaz Eftekhari, vice president of research at AAFA. “Despite this, disparities persist. Why? It boils down to two reasons: insufficient funding and lack of political will. Achieving equity in asthma is completely possible if all stakeholders agree to prioritize this work and invest the resources needed to make real change.”

AAFA’s report details 69 specific strategies to effectuate change. It also serves as a working guide and action plan for like-minded individuals, organizations and other stakeholders dedicated to upending dangerous racial and ethnic imbalances causing the most harm to people of color with asthma.

“It’s important we not only describe these egregious inequities but fully shift the focus toward finally eliminating them once and for all,” said Melanie Carver, AAFA’s chief mission officer. “That’s why we’ve created a roadmap within our report of direct action items aimed at tearing down barriers creating the heaviest burden on Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous Americans living with asthma. This report is also a call-to action to fix systemic failures and improve asthma care overall.”

Health disparities not only have an impact on affected groups but also limit the overall quality of health care for the entire population, leading to avoidable costs to the health care system. It is estimated that, from 2019 to 2038, the total cost of uncontrolled asthma could exceed \$963 billion in direct and indirect costs. Asthma is also the leading chronic disease among children and a top reason for missed school days.

You can find AAFA’s full report and executive summary at aafa.org/asthmadisparities

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About AAFA

Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA offers extensive support for individuals and families affected by asthma and allergic diseases, such as food allergies and atopic dermatitis (eczema). Through its online patient support communities, network of local chapters and affiliated support groups, AAFA empowers patients and their families by providing practical, evidence-based information and community programs and services. AAFA is the only asthma and allergy patient advocacy group that is certified to meet the standards of excellence set by the National Health Council. For more information, visit www.aafa.org.