Asthma is a leading chronic illness in the United States. The rising prevalence of asthma causes increased absenteeism and hospitalizations among students. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

» Low-income populations, minorities and children living in inner cities experience more emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths due to asthma than the general population.

» Asthma attacks, also referred to as episodes, can be caused by tobacco smoke, dust mites, furred and feathered animals, certain molds, chemicals and strong odors in the school environment.

» Asthma is the number one reason children miss school, and is the second leading cause of emergency department visits.

» Asthma can be controlled with proper diagnosis, appropriate asthma care and management activities.
In 2009, lifetime prevalence of asthma among high school students was 22.4%, the same as in 2008 (Figure 1). Nationally, asthma estimates have increased in one year, from 20.3% to 24.0%.

More male students and more black students had been diagnosed as having ever had asthma (Figure 1).
CURRENT ASTHMA

In 2009, 10.9% of all Louisiana students had asthma at the time of the survey, a slight increase from the 2008 survey of 9.0% (Figure 2). A similar trend is seen at the national level.

» Female students had higher rates of asthma at the time of the survey as compared to male students in both 2008 and 2009, and the percents have also increased (Figure 2).

» Black students were always higher than white students, and percents have increased (Figure 2).

*Out of the students who had been told by a doctor or nurse they ever had asthma, percentage that had asthma at the time of the 2008 survey.

FIGURE 2
**MISSED AT LEAST ONE DAY OF SCHOOL DUE TO ASTHMA**

In 2009, 4.9% of all students in Louisiana missed at least one day of school in the past year due to their asthma (Figure 3).

- Percents by gender were comparable in 2009, but 2008 showed that males missed more school because of asthma compared to females (6.0% vs 3.5%) (Figure 3).
- Races were equal in 2008, but in 2009, black students had a higher percent missing school than white students (6.5% vs 3.2%) (Figure 3).

*Note:* This question was not asked on the 2009 National YRBS Survey.
VISITED EMERGENCY ROOM ONE OR MORE TIMES BECAUSE OF ASTHMA

In 2009, 2.3% of all students visited an emergency room (ER) one or more times in the past year due to asthma (Figure 4), almost half of the percentage in 2008.

» More black students visited the ER because of asthma (3.5%) than white students (1.1%) (Figure 4).

» Trends varied by gender and grade level.

Note: This question was not asked on the 2009 National YRBS Survey.
SAW DOCTOR FOR ASTHMA CHECKUP

**Note:** Questions regarding doctor’s visit for asthma were not comparable between YRBS 2008 and 2009. Below are similar questions, but not measuring the exact same event.

- In 2008, 8.2% of all students saw a doctor at least once for an asthma check-up (Figure 5). Percents were similar between genders; the percent of black students were slightly higher than the percent of white students (8.7% vs. 7.4%). The 9th graders were higher than all other grades.

- In 2009, 13.5% of Louisiana students received an asthma action plan from their doctor/nurse (Figure 5). More male students received a plan than female students (14.8% vs 12.1%). More black students than white students received a plan (16.5% vs 10.8%). The 12th graders had a higher percent than all other grade levels (17.4%).

**FIGURE 5**

*Percentage of students who saw a doctor or nurse 1 or more times for a routine asthma checkup.

For more information on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey go to [http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm).
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