

## **World Asthma Day**

World Asthma Day (WAD) is an annual event takes place each year on the first Tuesday in May, organized by the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) to improve asthma awareness and care around the world. Each year GINA chooses a theme and organizes preparation and distribution of World Asthma Day materials and resources. World Asthma Day activities are organized in each country by health care professionals, educators, and members of the public who want to help reduce the burden of asthma.

The first World Asthma Day, in 1998, was celebrated in more than 35 countries in conjunction with the first World Asthma Meeting held in Barcelona, Spain. Participation has increased with each World Asthma Day held since then, and the day has become one of the world's most important asthma awareness and education events. One of GINA's most important activities is to work with international experts to produce guidelines, reports, and other resources about asthma. These materials incorporate the latest science to help improve asthma management and the lives of asthma patients around the world.

Asthma is a chronic disease characterized by recurrent attacks of breathlessness and wheezing, which vary in severity and frequency from person to person. It is the most common chronic disease among children. Symptoms may occur several times in a day or week in affected individuals, and for some people become worse during physical activity or at night. During an asthma attack, the lining of the bronchial tubes swell, causing the airways to narrow and reducing the flow of air into and out of the lungs. Recurrent asthma symptoms frequently cause sleeplessness, daytime fatigue, reduced activity levels and school and work absenteeism. Asthma has a relatively low fatality rate compared to other chronic diseases. According to WHO estimates, 300 million people suffer from asthma and 255000 people died of asthma in 2005.

Asthma is not just a public health problem for high income countries, it occurs in all countries regardless of level of development. Over 80% of asthma deaths occur in low and lower-middle income countries. Asthma is under-diagnosed and under-treated, creating a substantial burden to individuals and families and possibly restricting individuals' activities for a lifetime.

Although asthma cannot be cured, appropriate management can control the disease and enable people to enjoy good quality of life. Short-term medications are used to relieve symptoms. People with persistent symptoms must take long-term medication daily to control the underlying inflammation and prevent symptoms and exacerbations. Medication is not the only way to control asthma. It is also important to avoid asthma triggers - stimuli that irritate and inflame the airways. With medical support, each asthma patient must learn what triggers he or she should avoid. Although asthma does not kill on the scale of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or other chronic diseases, failure to use appropriate medications or to adhere to treatment can lead to death.

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