

Asthma



Picture a friend or loved one gasping for air all alone in their home, panicking to find the rescue inhaler, not knowing if they should go to the local emergency room, and the grim realities of asthma can be imagined. Asthma is one of the most common health problems with more people being diagnosed with it every day.

- 1.7 million adults and 500,000 children suffer from asthma in California.
- Asthma is responsible for 40,000 hospitalizations and 600 deaths in California annually.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by tightening airways, which makes breathing difficult. Common asthma symptoms are: wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, or shortness of breath. Smoke, animals, pollen,

molds, house dust mites, fumes, fragrances, or cold air can trigger asthma. The chances of being exposed to these triggers are high in our county, so asthma is a concern for all.

The good news is that asthma is manageable through medical providers recommendations and appropriate treatment. Professional athletes like Isaiah Thomas and Greg Louganis have been diagnosed with asthma, yet they lead a normal life. The key is to have a good Asthma Action Plan from your doctor and minimize exposure to triggers. Why then are emergency rooms seeing more people with asthma complications? What are some of the barriers surrounding availability and usage of asthma medications? These are some of the questions that concern Public Health and in response, formed the Stanislaus County Asthma Coalition. Today, over 50 members representing various agencies and communities are working together to improve the lives of individuals with asthma.

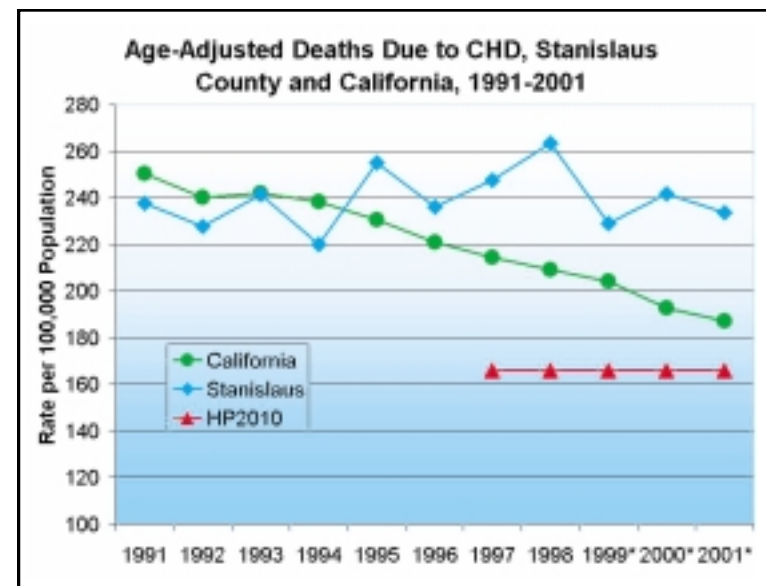
Heart Disease and Stroke

Heart Disease and Stroke are in the top three leading causes of death in Stanislaus County and California. Our county is ranked 56 out of 58 (or 3rd worst) for death rates due to heart disease and 42 (16 worst) for deaths due to stroke. In 2001, there were 1167 people who died from heart disease and 262 people who died from stroke in Stanislaus County.

Many of the factors that increase the likelihood of developing heart disease or suffering a stroke can be prevented, or at least controlled. These risk factors have been clearly identified:

- Tobacco smoking
- High blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes
- Overweight, obesity, and physical inactivity
- High levels of stress
- Family history and increased age

Efforts must be made to decrease the burden of heart disease and stroke in Stanislaus County. As a community, this can be accomplished through community activities, advocacy, environmental changes, policy change, collaborations, and individual behavior modifications.



5. Preparing for Terrorism

Assemble a disaster supply kit at home and learn first aid. Separate the supplies you would take if you had to evacuate quickly, and put them in a backpack or container, ready to go.

Lessen Your Risk for Heart Attack and Stroke:

1. Stop smoking, and reduce your exposure of second hand smoke.
2. Keep blood pressure in the ideal range of 130/80.
3. Keep total cholesterol under 200.
4. Engage in 30 minutes of physical activities daily.
5. Diabetics, keep your blood sugars within the desired range.
6. Eat a healthy diet, such as 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, reduce intakes of fats, cholesterol, and sugar, and eat plenty of fiber.
7. Identify the stressors in your life and seek help to control them.
8. Know your family history and check for risk factors.

HSA began to address this critical health issue in 1999 by establishing a countywide **HEART (Heart Education Awareness Resource Team) Coalition**, with members ranging from hospitals, health care providers, health plans, employers, to concerned citizens, grocery stores, and education. The purpose is to heighten public awareness of this preventable disease, and to develop resources for residents on lowering the above risk factors. To date, the **HEART Coalition** has published a second edition of a CVD prevention resource guide, conducted two heart information fairs for the public, and established a website www.heartcoalition.org.

