

In This Issue

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Breathing is essential to life. That's why it's so important to support healthy lungs and clean air, because from our first breath to our last, every breath counts. It's always better to prevent a disease than to treat it. Proven public health strategies, such as washing your hands and staying up-to-date on vaccinations, can protect both you and those around you. This is an important message to share, especially for the health of those living with a lung disease.

Influenza, or flu, is a serious respiratory illness that is easily spread from person to person. We are well into the flu season, and while we are all at risk for getting and spreading the flu, if you have asthma or other lung diseases, you are at higher risk of developing complications from the flu.

More than 33 million Americans live with a chronic lung disease, like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Education and support programs for those living with a lung disease, their caregivers and those that love them, is critical for improving their health and reducing the burden of living with a lung disease.

Asthma makes breathing difficult for millions of Americans, both young and old. While there is no cure, asthma can be managed and treated, and the 22 million Americans currently living with asthma, including over 6 million children, can live a happy and healthy life.

COPD is a chronic lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. The disease is increasingly common, affecting millions of Americans, and is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. In fact, in 2014, 16.1 million U.S. adults were estimated to have COPD, but close to 24 million adults have evidence of impaired lung function, indicating an under diagnosis of COPD. The good news is COPD is often preventable and treatable.

Investing in Lung Health

The American Lung Association's Nationwide Research Program has been a cornerstone of our organization for more than a century. Funding medical research is at the core of the American Lung Association's mission to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Our research builds healthier futures by funding the most innovative and inquisitive scientific minds, offering support to allow them to grow and advance in the field of lung health research. Through the American Lung Association's Awards and Grants Program, we are able to foster laboratory, patient-centered and social behavior research to prevent, treat and hopefully find a cure for all lung diseases.

This year, the Lung Association is investing \$6.49 million in lung health research, including more than \$3.8 million for lung disease research plus funding for the Airways Clinical Research Centers (ACRC). The Lung Association has also expanded the ACRC network to include not only asthma, but also research on COPD. The network will continue to directly impact patient care for asthma in diverse populations, but will now be able to conduct large, simple trials examining COPD as well.

Tobacco

Though the harmful consequences of tobacco use are well known, it remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the country. Cigarette smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals and can harm nearly every organ in your body. Every year in the U.S., close to half a million people die from tobacco-caused disease and thousands more experience a wide range of adverse health effects, including lung cancer and COPD.

Almost 87 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 18. Stronger laws are needed to keep kids from smoking and break the cycle of addiction, illness and death.

Secondhand smoke is also dangerous, and even short-term exposure can trigger a heart attack. Every year, more than 41,000 people die from exposure to secondhand smoke.

The American Lung Association works to strengthen laws and policies that protect everyone from secondhand smoke and the deadly effects of tobacco use. While I am happy to report that 28 states have passed comprehensive laws prohibiting smoking in almost all public places and workplaces, we need to ensure that everyone in all 50 states can enjoy clean, smokefree air where they live, work and play.

From chronic and infectious lung diseases to smokefree public spaces, supporting steps to protect lung health is critical to public health and saving lives. When it comes to advancing public health in Delaware and beyond, lung health is essential. Because if you can't breathe, nothing else matters.

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