

Summary

Asthma is one of the most common chronic illnesses in Canada, affecting 10% of children and 5% of adults. In Peel region, 8.3% of respondents from the *2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey* reported that they had been diagnosed with asthma by a health professional. The prevalence of asthma in children is increasing.

Asthma is the leading cause of hospitalization in Peel children under 10 years of age and the second most common cause for those 10–19 years old. Although overall rates of hospitalization for asthma have been declining over the past 15 years, hospitalization rates for Peel have been higher than provincial rates since 1997. In Peel between 1987 and 1996, there were 85 asthma-related deaths, mostly in the elderly.

There are a number of factors that have been found to increase the likelihood of the development of asthma or that contribute to the development of asthma symptoms. Many of these factors, including environmental tobacco smoke and air pollution, can be modified by effective public health programs and healthy public policy.