

Survey: Common Asthma Warnings Overlooked

Lack of awareness prevents patients with adult-onset asthma from seeking treatment

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DENVER, CO —

A new national asthma survey commissioned by National Jewish Health shows that many adults are unaware of common symptoms of asthma in adults. Doctors say that the findings explain why many adults with asthma may not realize that they have the disease, and don't seek treatment that can help them.

The survey shows that, while people are aware of some of the most common asthma signs such as wheezing and shortness of breath, many don't recognize other warning symptoms like trouble sleeping, chest pain and persistent cough.

"A lot of people have asthma and don't know it. Many adults do not have the traditional [asthma symptoms](#), or they don't have all of the symptoms," said [David Beuther, MD](#), pulmonologist at National Jewish Health. "It's not rare that your asthma doesn't present like the textbook. It's actually more common than most people realize. To the patient or perhaps the primary care provider, things that seem like a very unusual set of symptoms for asthma are actually quite common. That is why you often need a specialist to diagnose and treat it."

Dr. Beuther said that one in every 200 adults is newly diagnosed with asthma every year. And while children with the disease might have more common symptoms, adults who develop asthma typically have some of the less recognized symptoms.

Asthma Survey Results

Which are of the following are symptoms of adult onset asthma?

- Shortness of breath: 89%
- Wheezing: 85%
- Persistent cough: 65%
- Chest pain: 54%
- Trouble sleeping: 51%

The survey, commissioned by National Jewish Health, was conducted by ORC International Telephone CARAVAN® on March 3-6, 2016, via telephone. The combined sample consists of 1,002 adults (ages 18 years and older) living in the continental United States.

"These results are not surprising to those of us who see patients regularly. As a pulmonologist, I see people with symptoms that aren't yet defined, like difficulty breathing, cough and episodes of recurring bronchitis. When we first embark on trying to figure out what that is, I often mention that one of the big three causes of chronic cough, for example, is asthma. And it's more common than not that my patient is surprised to hear that a chronic cough or recurring bronchitis is actually asthma," said Dr. Beuther.

An avid hiker and cyclist diagnosed with asthma in her forties, 54-year-old Laurie Armijo of Niwot, Colorado, is one of the more than 17 million adults who have asthma.

"When I was diagnosed with exercise-induced asthma it was very difficult, because I had to pretty much give up a lot of

the sports that I love. It was kind of scary for me because I could not breathe to run, walk fast, swim or ride my bike. I basically couldn't breathe," Armijo said.

Armijo started using an inhaler when exercising so that she could resume her active lifestyle. Good medical care and monitoring keep her asthma under control.

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National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 123 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

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