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Title: Prevalence of asthma and asthma symptoms in a nationally-representative sample of adults in England

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Body: Introduction Asthma imposes a major burden on the NHS and individuals, with high numbers of emergency department attendance, hospital admission and days lost from work. Although the goal of asthma treatment is for patients to be symptom-free and able to lead a normal active life, evidence suggests that there is a wide variation in quality of care and outcomes. Aims To estimate the prevalence of asthma and level of symptom control in the population of England. Methods The annual Health Survey of England is a cross-sectional study of a random, nationally representative sample of 8,000 adults. It includes detailed interviews and objective measures by nurses. The 2010 survey examined lung disease with respiratory focused questions. Results The prevalence of lifetime doctor-diagnosed asthma was 16% in men and 17% in women: of these 30% of men and 39% of women had experienced an attack in the last year. 9% of men and 10% of women had current asthma (i.e. symptoms or medication in the last 12 months): in the last week around half of these reported daytime symptoms, a quarter symptoms that interfered with usual activities, and a quarter difficulties with sleep. Over half those with current asthma used beta-agonist inhalers every day, suggesting inadequate management and poor symptom control. Conclusion This large population survey confirms that current symptomatic asthma is common and that many people with asthma have poor disease control with frequent symptoms that interfere with normal life. To tackle this, a national Outcomes Strategy for COPD and Asthma in England has been launched to promote lung health awareness, earlier diagnosis and proactive disease management.