



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

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**EDUCATION AND AWARENESS HELP  
PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA BREATHE EASIER**

HONOLULU – With nearly 10 percent of Hawaii’s children having asthma and thousands more estimated to be undiagnosed, the Hawaii Department of Health is urging the public to learn more about the signs and symptoms of this chronic lung disease during May, National Asthma Awareness Month. The goal of May is National Asthma Awareness Month is to educate the community about the importance of a timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment in the care of people with asthma. Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be effectively treated.

“Taking a deep breath is a struggle for many Hawaii residents diagnosed with asthma,” said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. “People need to know that they don’t have to live like that, there are treatment plans that will allow them to live a healthy active life. “

Treatment of asthma aims at control of the disease, so the person with asthma does not experience asthma symptoms or acute attacks, does not have to overuse quick-relief medication or visit the emergency room, is able to engage in normal physical activity, and has normal lung function.

Asthma is one of the leading causes of work and school days missed each year nationwide. It costs Hawaii’s economy approximately \$43 million each year to control this complicated disease. Each year approximately 4,000 people in Hawaii are rushed to the emergency room because of asthma. Infants and very young children (0 - 4 years of age) continue to make up the majority of hospitalizations due to

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asthma. Although the asthma mortality rate has declined over the past 10 years, in Hawaii it remains above the national average, and in 2002, accounted for 21 deaths.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Breathe with Ease, a free public meeting will be held at the Renaissance Ilikai Waikiki Hotel from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. For more information, contact the Straub Foundation at 524-6755. The meeting will discuss the effect asthma has on approximately 25,250 children and 63,700 adults in Hawaii. Thousands of Hawaii's residents have asthma and don't even know it. Children, Native Hawaiians, female adults and individuals that reside in rural areas are especially vulnerable. Free asthma screenings will be being offered at:

- Costco Waipio, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- Kahala Mall, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- Waianae Mall, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.

For more information on the free asthma screenings call the Hawaii Society of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology at 538-1915.

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