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Awareness

Take a deep breath, as this may surprise you: Nearly one in 13 school-age children has asthma. It is the leading cause of school absenteeism in the U.S. due to chronic illness, accounting for more than 10 million missed school days per year.

“Many people still think of asthma as a disease of inconvenience, not as a disease that can kill,” said Dr. Michael A. LeNoir, a practicing consulting allergist and pediatrician in Oakland, California. LeNoir also is president of the Ethnic Health Institute at Alta Bates/Summit Medical Center and CEO of the Ethnic Health America Network, a series of radio and television programs that focus on how health care impacts minority populations.

“Asthma can kill. And it’s not the sick who die from asthma – it’s the poorly controlled.”

These statistics frustrate LeNoir – a nationally recognized expert on asthma in inner cities – because unlike other serious diseases, most cases of asthma can be controlled with little effect on a person’s daily life. Problems occur when the disease is not treated properly – especially in children. Children who suffer from persistent asthma often have problems in school, social situations and sports because of their inability to effectively move air through their lungs.

Asthma is often inadequately treated because it frequently goes undetected. “The most common symptom in children is not the wheezing most parents think of, but chronic cough,” said LeNoir, a father of four and grandfather of two. “If a child coughs when he exercises or laughs, or coughs at night when he’s not sick, it’s a warning sign.”

According to LeNoir, the most common triggers of asthma are allergies and house dust. Once a child develops asthma, many environmental factors can exacerbate its effects such as viral infections, exposure to pollution in major cities, and hydrocarbons from automobiles and diesel fuels.

LeNoir believes two separate problems contribute to poor asthma outcomes in African American communities – health disparity and health care disparity. “Health disparity is because of who you are. African Americans are genetically more at risk for certain diseases,” LeNoir said. “Health care disparity is because of who you represent, racially or ethnically. There should be no statistical difference, and yet there is a difference in the quality of care.”

To combat both issues, LeNoir devotes time to education and outreach. He lectures at medical meetings and conferences to teach health providers the proper methods of controlling asthma, since unaware physicians frequently prescribe rescue medicines such as Albuterol for long-term asthma maintenance, which is not an effective treatment.

“My goal is to make a difference beyond being a physician,” said LeNoir, who enjoys cooking and playing golf. “I want to be a good member of the community who is interested in the health of the entire community.”

Asthma

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FACT

Most children with persistent asthma over the age of 4 should have allergy evaluations.

March 2006 STAGE OF LIFE – Preteen

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Ash Wednesday 1914: Ralph Ellison, author, born.	2 1867: Congress enacts charter to establish Howard University.	3 1865: Freedmen’s Bureau established by federal government to aid newly freed slaves.	4 1965: Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics honored as NBA most valuable player for fourth time in five years.
5 1770: Crispus Attucks becomes one of the first casualties of the American Revolution.	6 1857: Supreme Court issues Dred Scott decision.	7 1965: Supreme Court upholds key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.	8 1951: The National Pharmaceutical Association incorporated under the laws of the state of Delaware. 1977: Henry L. Marsh III becomes first African American elected mayor of Richmond, Virginia.	9 1841: Amistad mutineers freed by Supreme Court.	10 1869: Robert Tanner Freeman becomes first black to receive a degree in dentistry. 1913: Harriet Tubman, abolitionist and Civil War nurse, dies.	11 1959: Lorraine Hansberry’s <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> opens at Barrymore Theater, New York, the first play by a black woman to premiere on Broadway.
12 1932: Andrew Young, former U.N. ambassador and former mayor of Atlanta, born.	13 1773: Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable, black pioneer and explorer, founded Chicago.	14 1956: Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott ends when municipal bus service is desegregated.	15 1947: John Lee, first black commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy, assigned to duty.	16 1827: <i>Freedom’s Journal</i> , the first U.S. black newspaper, is founded. 1846: Rebecca Cole, second black female physician in the U.S., born.	17 St. Patrick’s Day 1885: William F. Cosgrove patents automatic stop plug for gas and oil pipes. 1890: Charles B. Brooks patents street sweeper.	18 1822: The Phoenix Society, a literary and educational group, founded by blacks in New York City.
19 1971: The Rev. Leon Sullivan elected to board of directors of General Motors.	20 1883: Jan E. Matzeliger patents shoemaking machine.	21 1965: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. leads march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, for voting rights.	22 1898: J.W. Smith patents lawn sprinkler.	23 1873: Slavery abolished in Puerto Rico.	24 1907: Nurse and aviator Janet Harmon Bragg born.	25 1931: Ida B. Wells-Barnett, journalist, anti-lynching activist and founding member of the NAACP, dies.
26 1872: Thomas J. Martin patents fire extinguisher. 1911: William H. Lewis becomes U.S. assistant attorney general.	27 1924: Jazz singer Sarah Vaughan, “The Divine One,” born. 1930: Of the 116,000 blacks in professional positions, more than two-thirds were teachers or ministers.	28 1870: Jonathan S. Wright becomes first black state supreme court justice in South Carolina.	29 1918: Pearl Bailey, singer and actor, born.	30 1870: Fifteenth Amendment ratified, guaranteeing voting rights to blacks.	31 1988: Toni Morrison wins Pulitzer Prize for <i>Beloved</i> .	

One ragweed plant can release as many as a million grains of pollen in one day.

