



## FACTS ABOUT RESPIRATORY DISEASE

### The facts about respiratory disease

- There are more than 40 conditions which affect the lungs and/or airways and impact on a person's ability to breathe. They include lung cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), cystic fibrosis, sleep apnoea, avian flu, bronchiolitis and many others
- One person in every seven in the UK is affected by lung disease - this equates to approximately 8 million people
- Respiratory disease is on the rise in the UK<sup>1</sup>
- Respiratory disease is the second biggest killer in the UK (117,456 deaths in 2004<sup>2</sup>) after all non-respiratory cancers combined which only account for slightly more deaths (122,500 deaths in UK in 2004<sup>3</sup>)
- Respiratory disease is the second biggest killer globally after cardiovascular diseases<sup>4</sup>
- In 2020 out of 68 million deaths worldwide, 11.9 million will be caused by lung diseases<sup>5</sup>
- More people die from respiratory disease in the UK - 117,456 deaths in 2004 - than from ischaemic heart disease (106,081)<sup>6</sup>
- Respiratory disease now kills one in five people in the UK<sup>7</sup>
- Respiratory cancers are some of the biggest respiratory killers - nearly 35,000 people in the UK died from different respiratory cancers (30% of all respiratory deaths) in 2004<sup>8</sup>
- The UK's death rate from respiratory disease is almost double the European average and the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in Europe<sup>9</sup>
- Deaths from occupational lung disease are rising rapidly. This is due to a 75% increase in the number of mesothelioma deaths between 1988 - 1998<sup>10</sup>
- Death rates from respiratory disease in the UK have decreased by 40% since 1970. Over the same period, reported death rates from ischaemic heart disease fell by 53% and death rates from all cancers (excluding lung cancer) fell by 96%. This drop is however partly attributable to changes in how pneumonia deaths are coded in the UK. If these changes are considered, deaths from lung disease have changed little since 1984 whilst death rates from ischaemic heart disease have halved in the same period<sup>11</sup>
- Respiratory disease is the most commonly reported long term illness in children and the third most commonly reported in adults. One in 7 boys and 1 in 8 girls aged 2 - 15 report having long term respiratory illness in England<sup>12</sup>

## The cost of respiratory disease

- Respiratory disease costs the NHS and society £6.6 billion, £3 billion in costs to the care system, £1.9 billion in mortality costs and £1.7 billion in illness costs<sup>13</sup>
- An estimated 24 million consultations with GPs were for respiratory disease in 2004 at a cost of £501 million to primary care<sup>14</sup>
- Respiratory disease is the second most common illness responsible for emergency admission to hospital<sup>15</sup>. There are an estimated one million admissions a year for respiratory disease in the UK suggests at a cost of £1,496.4 million to secondary care<sup>16</sup>
- In 2002/2003 nearly 25 million certified sickness absence days related to respiratory disease (not including days lost from self-certified illness). This amounts to an estimated £1,728.5 million of lost production due to respiratory disease<sup>17</sup>
- Respiratory disease is a 'hidden disability'. People with lung disease can experience severe restrictions on their mobility and ability to undertake day-to-day activities, such as getting dressed or cooking a meal

## Causes of respiratory disease

- Lung disease is not simply smoking-related. There are a wide range of other factors which impact on lung health, including viral lung infections in childhood; inadequate lung development in childhood; passive smoking; genetics; air pollution; occupational exposure to materials such as dust, asbestos fibres and other irritant particles; nutrition and social deprivation
- There are clear social class gradients in respiratory disease mortality. Social class gradients are steeper for respiratory disease mortality than for mortality in general, with deaths from COPD and TB showing the most marked social class differentials<sup>18</sup>

For further information, please contact:  
British Lung Foundation  
Telephone: 020 7688 5555  
Email: [parliamentary@blf-uk.org](mailto:parliamentary@blf-uk.org)

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### References:

- <sup>1</sup> British Thoracic Society (2001) - Burden of Lung Disease
- <sup>2</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>3</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>4</sup> European Lung Foundation (2006)
- <sup>5</sup> European Lung Foundation (2006)
- <sup>6</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>7</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>8</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>9</sup> European Lung White Book (It lies 6<sup>th</sup> out of 45 in this league table. The European average is 65 deaths per 100,000, Ireland and the UK have 120 and 105 deaths per 100,000 respectively. Most other Western, as well as Central European countries, remain below the average)
- <sup>10</sup> British Thoracic Society (2001) - Burden of Lung Disease
- <sup>11</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>12</sup> The Health of Young People, 1995 - 1997, Joint Health Surveys Unit, Stationery Office, London
- <sup>13</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>14</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>15</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>16</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>17</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition
- <sup>18</sup> British Thoracic Society (2006) - Burden of Lung Disease 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition