

Respiratory disease overview

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Respiratory diseases affect the airways, lungs and respiratory muscles that are involved in gas exchange. They include both infectious diseases and chronic respiratory diseases such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) and asthma. They are among the most common causes of death in young infants and the very old. Exposure to occupational hazards, urban air pollution, smoking and second-hand smoke (which increases risk of acute bronchiolitis in infants) all increase the risk of respiratory disease.

Mortality due to respiratory diseases varies geographically, reflecting the urban/rural split and smoking patterns. An overall reduction over time is likely to be influenced by reductions in smoking. In 2010, infectious respiratory diseases accounted for over 40% of all mortality due to respiratory diseases.

The Marmot review¹ has shown a social gradient in many health outcomes which contributes to England's poorer health outcomes in comparison with other countries. Incidence and mortality from respiratory disease are higher in disadvantaged groups and areas.

Respiratory health can be protected by ensuring that appropriate standards for air pollution and occupational hazards are monitored and adhered to. This is conducted through the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local environmental health services. Respiratory health is also supported by promoting smoking cessation and ensuring high uptake rates for pneumococcal and annual influenza vaccinations².

In England in 2010/11 respiratory disease accounted for:

- around 144,300 potential years of life lost (PYLL) in people under 75 (6% of all PYLL); and
- around 4,297,000 hospital bed days (10% of all bed days).

The main causes of years of life lost were Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) (38%) and infectious respiratory diseases (35%). For hospital bed days infectious respiratory diseases accounted for 58% and COPD 18%¹.

There were 1,548 deaths from respiratory disease in Hampshire in 2011: 605 (39%) due to pneumonia; 466 (30%) due to COPD and there were 25 deaths (1.6%) from asthma.

There are two chapters covering lung health and respiratory disease – one on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder and one on asthma.

¹ Marmot Review

² CMO Annual Report

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/142164/CMO_Annual_Report_Vol_1.pdf