CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis, is an irreversible, progressive disease that impairs breathing. Symptoms include coughing, phlegm production, wheezing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest. The leading risk factor for COPD is cigarette smoking, however other contributors include exposure to lung irritants, such as chemicals, pollution, and dust, and genetic factors. Chronic lower respiratory disease, which includes both COPD and asthma, was the fourth leading cause of death in 2010 among U.S. women aged 18 years and older (see Leading Causes of Death).

In 2009–2011, 5.4 percent of U.S. adults reported a diagnosis of COPD (data not shown). Women were more likely than men to report COPD (6.4 versus 4.3 percent, respectively). Among both men and women, COPD is more common among older age groups. For example, among women, the prevalence of COPD was highest among those aged 65–74 years (11.2 percent) and 75 years or older (10.4 percent) compared to 4.0 percent among women aged 18–44 years.

COPD prevalence also varied by race and ethnicity and poverty level. Among women, COPD was most common among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Natives and non-Hispanic women of multiple races (8.6 and 9.9 percent, respectively), followed by non-Hispanic White women (7.0 percent), non-Hispanic Black women (6.1 percent), and Hispanic women (4.9 percent). COPD was least common among non-Hispanic Asian women (2.6 percent). With regard to income, women with household incomes less than 100 percent of poverty were more than twice as likely to report a COPD diagnosis as compared to those with incomes of 400 percent or more of poverty (10.1 versus 4.6 percent, respectively; data not shown).

While there is no cure, treatment for COPD begins with smoking cessation for those who smoke. Additional therapies to control symptoms and slow disease progression may include medication, oxygen therapy, pulmonary rehabilitation, and surgery.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease* Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Age and Sex, 2009–2011

Source II.1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease* Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity** and Sex, 2009–2011

Source II.1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey

*Reported ever being diagnosed by a doctor or other health professional with emphysema or being diagnosed with chronic bronchitis in the past twelve months; total estimates are age-adjusted.

**The sample of non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders was too small to produce reliable results.

†Estimate does not meet the standards of reliability or precision.