

# BROOKLYN HEALTH

BROOKLYN HEALTH REPORT SUPPLEMENT, OCTOBER 2010

## Obesity and Asthma

Obesity is a major health problem in Brooklyn and New York City. Being overweight or obese increases the chance of having serious health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Research suggests that obesity can also raise the risk of asthma, a disease of the lungs that causes breathing problems.

### Obesity in Brooklyn

A recent New York City Community Health Survey\* found that nearly one in four adults in Brooklyn is overweight or obese.

The map below shows that in 7 out of 11 Brooklyn neighborhoods, 20 percent or more of the adults are obese.

### Asthma in Overweight or Obese New Yorkers

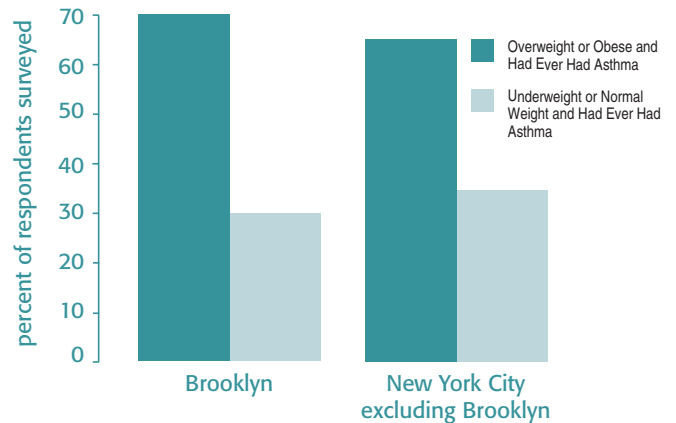
More overweight or obese Brooklynites and New York City residents surveyed said that they had asthma than those who were a normal weight or underweight.

Obesity in Brooklyn Neighborhoods, 2009



Percent of Adults Who Are Obese Under 20% 20 to 30% Over 30%

Asthma Among Adults in Brooklyn and NYC, 2009



Why obesity raises the risk of asthma is not fully known. The cells that line the airways become inflamed, which makes breathing more difficult. The greater the increase in body mass the more effect it has on the swelling in the airways.

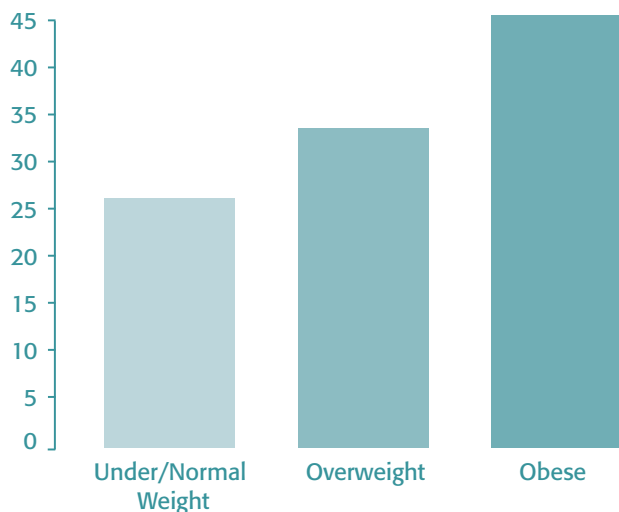
\*Source: 2009 Community Health Survey, Public Data Files - Epiquery, NYCDOHMH, 2010

## Being Obese Makes Asthma Harder to Control

Not everyone who is overweight or obese has asthma. But, obesity can make it harder to control asthma. Asthma medications often do not work as well for obese people.

Nearly half of adults surveyed who were obese said that they had gone to a hospital emergency room one or more times in the past year because of an asthma attack. But, only 25 percent of adults surveyed who had asthma but were a healthy weight or underweight had an asthma-related ER visit.

**Emergency Room Visits for Adults with Asthma in New York City, 2009**



Source: 2009 Community Health Survey, Public Data Files - Epiquery, NYCDOHMH, 2010

## What You Can Do

If you are overweight or obese, get checked regularly by a doctor or healthcare professional for asthma or other respiratory problems.

Work with your doctor or other healthcare professional to help you get your weight under control.

### Some other important things to do:

**Stay active:** Increase your physical activity gradually, like taking short walks more frequently.

**Cut down:** Eat less fats and processed foods and more fruits and vegetables.

**Eat slowly:** It takes 15 minutes or more for the brain to get the message that you are full.

**Add fiber:** Whole grains, lentils, and beans can help you feel full with less calories.

To learn more about obesity and asthma, as well as other health concerns facing Brooklyn, go to :  
[www.downstate.edu/bhr](http://www.downstate.edu/bhr)