

# Fact Sheet – World Lung Day 2019

## Lung Health Facts

- 384 million people suffer from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and 3 million die from it each year, making it the third leading cause of death worldwide [1].
- 10 million people develop tuberculosis and 1.6 million die from it each year, making it the most common lethal infectious disease [2].
- 1.76 million people die from lung cancer each year, making it the most deadly cancer [3].
- 334 million people suffer from asthma [1].
- Asthma is the most common chronic disease of childhood, affecting 14 percent of children globally – and rising [1].
- 4 million people die from lower respiratory tract infections and pneumonia each year [1].
- Every minute, 2 children under 5 years old die from pneumonia [4].
- 80 percent of pneumonia deaths are in children under 2 years [4].
- Most (99 percent) deaths occur in low or middle-income countries [4]
- Pneumonia is the leading cause of death in the very young and very old.
- Passive smoke exposure also leads to respiratory disease. Since 1964, about 2.5 million non-smokers died from health problems caused by exposure to second-hand smoke [1].
- 4.2 million people die every year as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution [5].
- 3.8 million people die every year as a result of household exposure to smoke from dirty cookstoves and fuels [5].
- 91 percent of the world's population live in places where air quality exceeds WHO guideline limits [5].

## Respiratory Disease Prevention

- Fortunately, most respiratory diseases are **PREVENTABLE** by improving the quality of the air. Common sources of unhealthy air are tobacco smoke, indoor and outdoor air pollution, and air containing microbes, toxic particles, fumes, or allergens.
- Discouraging individuals from starting to smoke tobacco and encouraging smokers to quit smoking are the first and most important priorities in preventing COPD.
- Asthmatics who smoke have a more rapid decline in lung function than lifelong non-smokers.
- Avoiding smoking during pregnancy and avoidance of passive smoke exposure after birth can reduce asthma severity in children.
- Reducing air pollution saves lives and reduces the risk of many diseases.
- Vaccinations are essential for the control and elimination of many childhood respiratory diseases.
- Controlling unhealthy air in the workplace can prevent occupational lung disease.
- Most cases of TB can be cured if diagnosed early and treated appropriately.
- Lung cancer is largely preventable through tobacco control.
- Environmental causes of lung cancer, such as air pollution, radon, and asbestos, can be monitored and reduced.

The respiratory societies of the world believe that everyone has the right to breathe clean air and we ask lawmakers to enact and ensure clean air standards in all countries.

## Universal Health Coverage

- At least half of the world's population still do not have full coverage of essential health services [6].
- About 100 million people are still being pushed into extreme poverty because they have to pay for health care [6].



- Over 800 million people (almost 12 percent of the world's population) spent at least 10 percent of their household budgets to pay for health care [6].
- To improve respiratory health globally, we need to ensure that everyone has access to the services they need to improve their lung health.
- A break in the supply of medicine for a patient with tuberculosis could cause the development of drug resistance, which carries serious consequences.
- The abrupt unavailability of asthma medicine could cause severe suffering and even death.
- Lack of health care provider availability usually means delay in diagnosis, which could be fatal for lung cancer patients.

## References

1. The Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (2019 Report)
2. WHO, [Tuberculosis](#).
3. WHO, [Cancer](#).
4. Fighting for Breath: A call to action on childhood pneumonia. [Save the Children 2017](#).
5. WHO, [Pollution](#).
6. WHO, [Universal Health Coverage](#).

## About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

[The Forum of International Respiratory Societies](#) (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (CHEST), [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), [Asian Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), [Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax](#) (ALAT), [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases](#) (The Union), [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS), [Global Initiative for Asthma](#) (GINA), and the [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease](#) (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of the world respiratory health organisations, professionals and their patients.

For more information about FIRS please contact Lisa Roscoe [lisa.roscoe@firsnet.org](mailto:lisa.roscoe@firsnet.org).



International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease  
Health solutions for the poor

