

Study Description

BASTA

Border Asthma & Allergies Study

Goals of BASTA

BASTA aims to complete the following goals by August 2005:

1. Determine the number of 13 and 14 year olds in Imperial County with asthma, asthma symptoms and allergies.
2. Examine family, environmental, and socio-economic influences on asthma.
3. Compare and contrast asthma prevalence and risk factors on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Achieving these goals will improve our understanding of asthma in Imperial County and help asthma programs determine how to effectively target health and education interventions to address the problem.

This study is supported by the Imperial County Public Health Department, Imperial Valley Asthma Coalition, Dr. James Ellis, Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia, and Senator Denise Ducheny. BASTA is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and conducted by the California Department of Health Services and Impact Assessment, Inc.

The California Department of Health Services will conduct an important school-based asthma survey in 13 and 14 year old children in Imperial County. The survey is part of a study called BASTA, or the Border Asthma and Allergies Study. BASTA also means “enough” in Spanish. Students who participate in the study will fill out a questionnaire that will help us learn about asthma, the environment and breathing problems in children. Asthma is a lung disease that can cause episodes of wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. It is the most common chronic disease in children in the U.S. and is believed to be underdiagnosed. Each year about 600 people in California die from asthma, yet the causes of asthma are not well understood. We need your help and student participation to make this study a success.

Asthma in Imperial County

Asthma is a serious problem in Imperial County. The County has the highest asthma hospitalization rates among children in the State. A local report released in 2003 by the Clean Air Initiative¹ found that community members believe that asthma may be more widespread than current government estimates indicate; government statistics show that about 1 in 10 children have had asthma, but a small survey conducted in 2001 in Calexico and Mexicali found that around 1 in 4 children had this condition. Your participation would help us determine exactly how common asthma is in Imperial County.

Asthma Affects Academic Performance

Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism and results in missed workdays for parents.

- ▶ Each year in the U.S., children experiencing asthma-related problems miss 14 million school days.
- ▶ Missed sleep due to nighttime asthma can cause children to have poor memory recall, lack of concentration, and mood swings.
- ▶ Children with asthma have to miss school for doctors’ appointments (more than 2.7 million physician visits are made yearly).

“Imperial County has the highest asthma hospitalization rates among children in the State.”

Study Methods

Much of the BASTA study will be based on responses to a questionnaire asking about asthma and allergy symptoms, home environment, and child and family medical histories. Questionnaires will be available in English and Spanish and will be filled out anonymously in class.

Students will answer by checking responses that correspond to their situation. Most students will be able to complete the survey in about 30 minutes.

We plan to survey up to 3,500 students using a video and questionnaire that have been used successfully in 56 countries in a study called ISAAC, or the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood. The 13- to 14-year-old age group was chosen because asthma is common at this age and the students can complete the questionnaire themselves. An additional smaller study will be conducted with about 150 students, who will be asked to perform some simple breathing tests.

For more information or to find out how your class can participate in this study, contact:

Lori Copan
760-960-8881
lcopan@dhs.ca.gov

1. The Clean Air Initiative is a bi-national partnership administered by the American Lung Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties. See http://www.lungsandiego.org/environment/article_imperial_mexicali.asp.