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England than in other regions of the country.

It's more common than in the mid Atlantic, which has more factors associated with asthma.

Like, more urban centers, greater poverty, and a larger black and Hispanic population.

Alice Bruning, of the Department of Health and Human Services, says high asthma rates are probably due "at least in part" to poor air quality.

Bruning: We are downwind, and there's been a great deal of talk over the last few years about the air pollution issues in NH that are caused from airflow coming from the Midwest, power plants, etcetera.

Depending on where the wind and weather are coming from, New Hampshire's air quality can be the worst in the country.

But at other times, the air can be some of the cleanest.

This inconsistency makes it hard to parse out just how much outdoor air is responsible for asthma rates.

Bruning says poor indoor air quality could also factor.

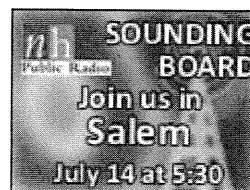
Bruning: People in New England spend more time indoors, than people perhaps in warmer climates. So when you get less air flow through a household then things like dust mites, cockroaches, environmental tobacco smoke, all of these things are going to concentrate even more.

And according to the Centers for Disease Control, New Hampshire leads the region in adult smoking rates.

Dr. David Goodman, a pediatric pulmonologist, notes that asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases among children.

He posits that higher asthma rates could reflect better detection.

Goodman: I think it's true that the awareness of asthma by practitioners, particularly by primary care physicians in Northern New England has substantially increased over the 17 years that I've been at Dartmouth Hitchcock. It was fairly common 15 years ago to see patients who had chest symptoms, for even a fairly prolonged period



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