

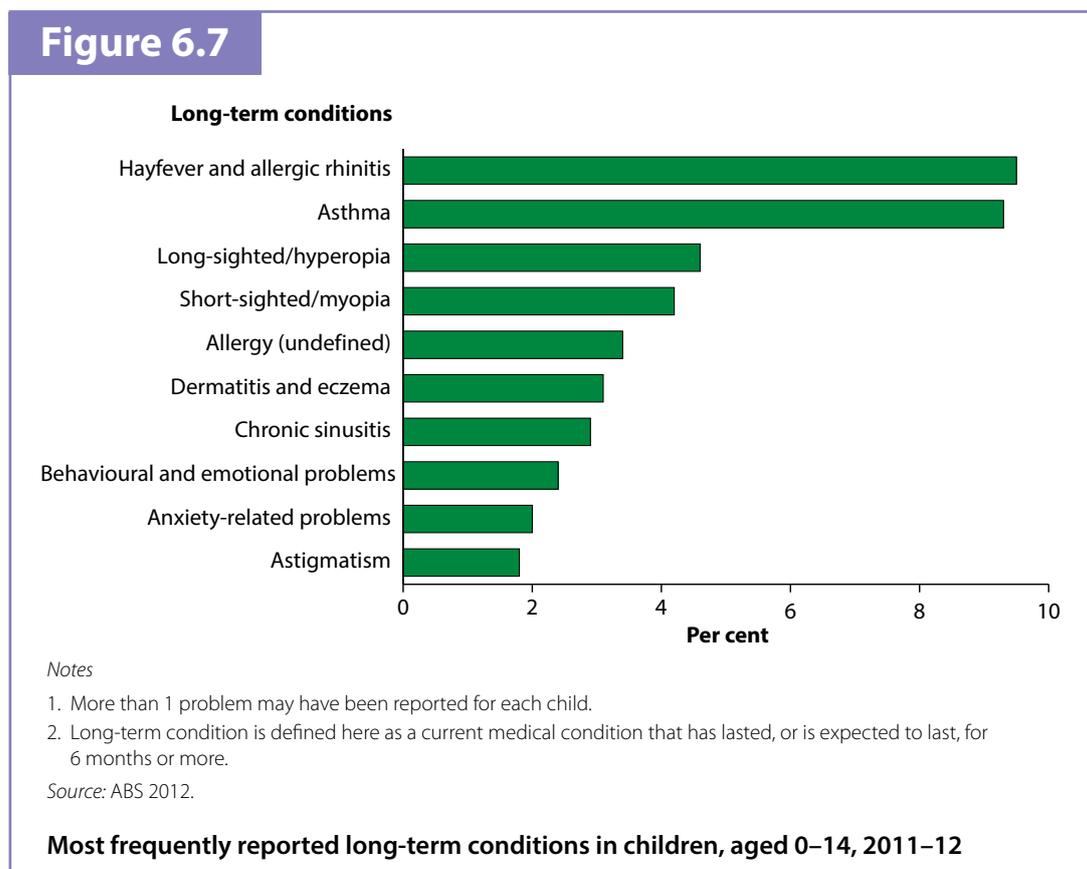
## 6.4 How healthy are Australian children?

While most Australian children enjoy good health, some experience chronic or acute conditions that can disrupt normal growth and childhood development, and affect participation in school and other activities. This snapshot looks at some of the chronic diseases that have serious health effects on children (defined as those aged 0–14). In 2012, there were almost 4.2 million children in Australia (2.2 million boys and 2 million girls)—almost one-fifth (19%) of the total population.

### Common long-term health conditions

In 2011–12, the most common long-term conditions affecting children were hay fever and allergic rhinitis, asthma and long- and short-sightedness (see Figure 6.7).

**Figure 6.7**





The following selected serious conditions, which are also National Health Priority Areas, can affect the physical, social and emotional development of children.

### **Asthma**

- Asthma and allergic rhinitis commonly occur in people with hypersensitivity to allergens. In 2011–12, asthma affected 393,100 children (about 9%) (ABS 2012). There has been little change since 2007–08.
- Asthma was more common among boys than girls (11% compared with 7%), even though after the age of 15 it was more common in women than men (ABS 2012). (See also Chapter 6 ‘Youth health: the prime of life?’).

### **Diabetes**

Type 1 diabetes is a serious condition that most often appears during childhood or adolescence and requires ongoing management to control and reduce the risk of complications. Type 2 diabetes is rare in younger age groups, with incidence stable over the last 10 years (AIHW 2014b).

- In 2008, more than 5,700 children had type 1 diabetes and the number is projected to rise to more than 6,400 by the end of 2013 (AIHW 2011).
- In 2011 there were 983 new cases of type 1 diabetes among children (23 per 100,000 children) with little difference between boys and girls (AIHW 2014a).
- The rate of new cases of type 1 diabetes in children did not change significantly from 2000 to 2011, fluctuating between 21 and 26 per 100,000 children each year.

### **Cancer**

Although cancer is rare in childhood, it is a leading cause of death, accounting for about 19% of deaths among 1–14 year olds in 2009–11.

- During 2006–2010, an average of 599 of new cases were diagnosed annually (15 per 100,000 children), with little difference between boys and girls. The rate has remained unchanged from 2001–2005 (AIHW Australian Cancer Database 2010).
- Since 2001, the most common cancer types in these cases have been lymphoid leukaemias, neuroblastoma and ganglioneuroblastoma, and acute myeloid leukaemias (4.1, 1.1 and 0.8 per 100,000 children respectively during 2006–2010).
- The proportion of 0–14 year olds who survived cancer 5 years after diagnosis improved from 68% in 1983–1989 to 81% in 2004–2010.



### What is missing from the picture?

Emotional and behavioural problems that are not dealt with during the early years can develop into full-scale, long-term mental health problems. Child behavioural problems have been identified as an indicator requiring further data development work in the [National Outcome Measures for Early Childhood Development](#).

### Where do I go for more information?

More detailed information on children's health, including overweight and obesity is available at [www.aihw.gov.au/child-health-development-and-wellbeing/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/child-health-development-and-wellbeing/) or the AIHW's data portal for Children's Headline Indicators at [www.aihw.gov.au/chi/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/chi/).

### References

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2012. Australian Health Survey: first results, 2011–12. ABS cat. no. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2011. Prevalence of type 1 diabetes in Australian children, 2008. Diabetes series no. 15. Cat. no. CVD 54. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW, 2014a. Incidence of insulin-treated diabetes in Australia, 2000–2011. Cat. no. CVD 66. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014b. Type 2 diabetes in Australia's children and young people: a working paper. Diabetes series no. 21. Cat. no. CVD 64. Canberra: AIHW.