

As I stated in the first article covering the topic of asthma, there would be another to follow. The first article included an interview from my colleague, Dr. Kanga. Now, as promised, we will take another look at asthma from a different point of view. I prefer to relay personal information, stories, and my experiences to you, because it adds another layer. For example, I have been affected by various allergies my entire life. I still take prescription medication, but I have vastly improved, in my opinion by altering my lifestyle. I take fish oil, Probiotics, a multivitamin, and extra Vitamin C. I also have rather severe glaucoma which to date, has required two surgeries on each eye and prescription drops every day. I also take supplements for this disease and even receive acupuncture for the condition. Let's put it this way, I am a surgeon who has been classically trained in outstanding clinical learning institutions, but I know there are many aspects involved regarding patient care. In fact, one of my goals is to keep you from becoming a patient in the first place, or at least delay it as long as possible. This is why I invited Cathy Leet, BSN, another esteemed colleague to participate in these series of articles. Cathy is the one of the most respected people in the field of Integrative Medicine, and in fact, advises me in regards to my supplements. Now, you too, can benefit from her knowledge in the field. The following article provides a great deal of information concerning asthma and the integrative approach to the disease. I ask you to read it, study it, and discuss with your child's physician to see if it is right for you. Again, in my personal lifestyle, Cathy and her work have made a very positive difference. So, the remainder of the article is all Cathy.

Asthma occurrence in children (and adults) is growing in number and severity. There are many prescription medication offerings, but let's look at applying dietary and lifestyle measures to address all areas of solutions.

With the ever increasing amount of information on the internet and all the advice books around today; one needs to be cautious of health information. This article will only use proven safe and effective suggestions; good advice for all is to always ask for proof of safety and efficacy in any health advice. The suggestions in this article are not intended to take the place of medical care but to help you to discuss options with a health care professional on what is the best for your child. Before taking any supplements or making any adjustments in your lifestyle, consult your physician.

Asthma can be triggered by toxic chemicals, cold air, exercise, infection, emotional upset, and by food allergens. But whatever the trigger the reaction is the inflammation caused by compounds known as leukotrienes and histamines. These compounds released in the body promote inflammation in various body tissues including the respiratory pathway. We will look at ways to prevent or reduce the amount of these inflammatory compounds and may very well eliminate or greatly reduce the asthma reactions in the child.

So, what are ways one can reduce the amount of inflammation in the body?

First, they can avoid airborne allergens as much as possible, the most obvious being cigar or cigarette smoke. Things such as dust mites in bedding and beds, carpet, and even animal dander have all been pointed at as triggers. Many people go to the extremes in every area, but take a look at these causes, and see if there are areas where you can make small adjustments. And definitely before you give away Fluffy the cat or Sam the dog, see if just preventing them

from being in the child's bedroom is sufficient. Or instead of having all the carpet removed in the house consider just the child's bedroom. Encasing the mattress, box springs and pillows is also a great way to reduce airborne allergens such as dust mites as well. Scented bath soaps, lotions, and perfumes can also be potential culprits. Remember most all fragrances used today are chemicals derived from petroleum products and not from natural sources such as plants and flowers like they used to be.

But we have to look at what causes one child to be more affected by allergens over another. The child that is easily affected has a cell wall that is weaker and can be easily irritated to release these inflammatory compounds. Healthy fatty acids, known as Omega 3 fatty acids are what build a healthy cell wall. An unhealthy cell wall is secondary to increased amounts of animal fats or excessive Omega 6 fats in the diet. Research has shown if you increase your Omega 3's and decrease your Omega 6's, you can greatly decrease the inflammation that triggers asthma. Omega 3 fatty acids are in salmon, walnuts, and flax seeds. And the Omega 6's are cooking oils, fried foods, and margarine. Be sure to choose lean meats, reduce the Omega 6's (that is the French fries, potato chips, etc), and increase the 3's. An easy way to get Omega 3's is in fish oil; but beware, unless your fish oil has been shown to be safe and effective in clinical studies don't use it. Plus many fish oils on the market are over-concentrated and will actually cause inflammation.

The other known triggers are food allergies. Keep a food journal for a week or two, see what foods your child had on days he had more breathing problems. It is very common to see a similar food item that triggers more than others. Sometimes it can be something they eat immediately, and other times it can be a delayed reaction. I recommend logging at least 24 hours of foods they ate prior to the reaction. Food additives may be causing the reaction, such as the yellow food dye (tartrazine). It has been studied that the vitamin B6 may prevent a reaction to this food dye. So, be sure your child is taking a good child's multivitamin, as there are many nutrients known to be beneficial and not just B6.

Food additives have been looked at as triggers of allergic reactions and asthma; so really watch those processed and preserved foods to be sure they are not contributing. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation list several items that may trigger reactions, but the main ones are; sulfites (in dried fruits), Aspartame (NutraSweet) (in colas and candies), and Tartrazine (yellow food dye).

Now, let's look at 2 of the most common deficiencies in the diet associated with an increased risk of asthma. First, is a low intake of foods rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants are in the fruits, vegetables, and whole grains we are supposed to eat daily. It is important, VERY important; we get our children to eat more fruits and vegetables for their health today and into the future. A good clue is the more color the plant food has; the richer it is in antioxidants. This is why that canned vegetable is so pale, as all the good nutrients have been cooked out with the color. One of the major antioxidants that helps those with allergies and asthma is Vitamin C. Vitamin C is a natural anti histamine and anti inflammatory vitamin. When a person's body is under stressful conditions, temperature changes, chilled, exertion, or around allergens in the air, their body has a much higher need for Vitamin C. Tobacco smoke greatly depletes vitamin C, and vitamin C is

a very important protector of lung health. Most everyone thinks they get enough C by that glass of juice or in that orange, but did you know there is more vitamin C in kale, broccoli, red bell pepper, and strawberries than in an orange? Harvard Medical School, researchers found that "people who got at least 200mg of vitamin C a day had a 30 percent reduced risk of bronchitis or wheezing compared with people who got about 100mg of the vitamin daily". Eating foods rich in vitamin C is linked to improved levels of lung capacity. You can get extra C in pill form and increase the intake of citrus fruits, cantaloupe, strawberries, red peppers, tomatoes, cabbage or broccoli.

The second most common deficiency is the mineral magnesium. Sadly, the American population doesn't consume enough magnesium unless they take more than a once-a-day multivitamin. Minerals are large, and you just cannot get enough in a once-a-day multivitamin. There are good daily multivitamin formulas with minerals available, but these will be at least 2 doses per day to give you an optimal level of minerals. Magnesium is found in dark rich whole grains, nuts, and seeds. Magnesium helps open the airways and relax bronchial smooth muscle. Low levels of magnesium can be associated with symptoms such as fatigue, restlessness, insomnia, muscle cramps, and headaches. There are other key nutrients such as Vitamin D, Carotenoids (vitamin A), Vitamin E, Vitamin B12, and Selenium that are also shown to support the prevention of asthma. But, I hesitate to list these nutrients singly because so many people make the mistake of only taking these individual nutrients by themselves. When we eat food there is a perfect combination of nutrients in a balance; therefore you should never piece in individual vitamin and minerals, but take them in a foundation multi vitamin mineral formula first. Then if you want to add some extra C, B, or others, you can.

There is strong evidence excess salt intake can increase bronchial reaction to histamine, so keep your child's sodium intake moderate. And drinking water helps to thin mucus. This is a great tool for not only asthma prevention but sinus and throat infections as well. Our bodies are 70% water. Thick mucus is at the root of non-contagious infections and breathing problems.

I saved one of the most important points for last. This may be the number one contributor to asthma in children. Poor bowel health can contribute to histamine release every time a child eats a meal. Studies have shown children who start off with a healthier bowel environment in their youth have less asthma and allergies later in life. One of the best ways to create a healthy bowel environment, other than a nutritious, balanced diet, is the use of probiotics. In the intestines we have good bacteria which are part of our digestion and immune systems. What we eat can greatly influence this environment and weaken its health benefits. Eating foods rich in fiber encourages it to grow healthy whereas a diet high in sugar doesn't. Antibiotics do their job in fighting the bad bacteria, but they also kill some of the good bacteria. When the good bacteria count is low or weak, it can contribute to an intestinal release of histamine with every meal.

You may have heard of probiotics in a food called yogurt, but these are not often strong enough to change the environment to help. And the yogurts everyone seems to like are not truly healthy, as they have too much sugar in them. So, our best option is probiotic supplements. Since probiotic bacteria can die sitting on the store shelf, be sure to use one that can guarantee it is

live when you take it. There is a new pearl technology, a triple coated process that is proven to keep it alive. I would start with that one. It's also the most affordable.

Some children who after the use of probiotics still have foods causing allergies can try a plant based enzyme to help digest their food. Many have found eliminating dairy prevents thick mucus and less inflammation. Dairy contains a hard to digest protein, and when this protein is not digested completely, it becomes an irritant in the bowel and releases the inflammatory compounds. Remember, if we only remove the milk protein, we may not have addressed the child's ability to digest other proteins well, too. So, I choose to look at the overall bowel health and help them to digest all proteins more efficiently. Try the probiotics and see how that helps first; then give the enzymes a try, and see if there is even greater benefit. Better protein digestion also means better muscle and body growth. I reiterate, because every child is different, please make sure you check with your physician before trying supplementation. Your doctor needs to know what you are putting inside your body in order to have a complete, overall picture of you, the individual patient.

So, to summarize:

Reduce exposure to allergens in the air; animal dander, carpet, and bedding or other items you know tend to be triggers, such as wet leaves, pollen, fresh cut grass, perfumes, tobacco smoke, etc.

Reduce animal fat and cooking oils.

Increase consumption of plant food sources, healthy fats, walnuts, and seeds. Consider clinically studied fish oil.

Keep a food diary, and look for triggers such as food additives.

Eat more colorful fruits and vegetables.

Take a good optimal level of vitamins and minerals in a multivitamin mineral formula (more than a once-a-day).

Consider extra Vitamin C and magnesium.

Drink more water, watch excessive salt.

Take a good Probiotic for better digestion of foods and absorption of nutrients.

Eliminate hard to digest proteins such as dairy if it creates issues with breathing or excess mucus. Consider a plant enzyme to help digest proteins better if probiotics aren't enough.

Always consult your physician before any changes you make or begin supplementation. Your doctor needs to know what you are taking, so accurate records are kept.

Cathy, please accept my thanks on behalf of the parents, coaches, and athletes who may benefit from this outstanding presentation. We look at all sides of the equation, and make educated decisions in regards to our health. I look forward to further collaborations with you in these series of articles, as we all work together to prevent injury and illness among young athletes.

Sincerely,

Steve

Cathy Leet, BSN, has been an educator to leaders in integrative medicine and pharmacy since 1992. Cathy has a background in nursing, nutrition, herbal medicine, genomics, and as a medical laboratory technician. She has co-authored and authored books, protocols, and integrative educational seminars, and been a guest on TV and radio shows nationwide.



Away from work, Cathy teaches and ministers through a non-profit organization that raises money for several charitable causes.

You can contact Cathy at cathy@integrativeinc.com

Dr. Steven Snodgrass is a board-certified surgeon, a member of the American Medical Association, a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and Chief Executive Officer of Peak Performance Foods.

His new product, Pro-Bites, was made for people who care about their bodies and want the best quality food they can eat. He understands how hard it is for you and your parents to get up every morning and go to work and school. Many times, people don't eat because they are in a hurry. Don't do that, because it hurts your body. He made so you could pop open a bag and go!

Dr. Steven Snodgrass works with athletes from all sports over the phone and through email to create nutritional programs. For more information write to ssnodgrass@probites.com. He also offers Pro-Bites for athletes and coaches at www.probites.com.