

Asthma and Kids

By Randall Neustaedter OMD

Asthma Incidence Dramatically Increasing

Allergic conditions can begin at any age. Infants can develop eczema soon after birth. Babies can also suffer from asthmatic reactions to viruses with chronic coughs and/or wheezing following colds. Preschoolers may develop sensitivity to milk and chronic sinus congestion or ear problems. However, it is during ages 5 through 10 that allergies and asthma become especially prevalent. Children at this age develop seasonal hay fever attacks and asthmatic reactions to animals, dust mites and plants. Asthma may also manifest as exercise-induced wheezing when children begin playing sports (soccer, basketball or swimming) that challenge their endurance.

Allergies affect about 38 percent of all Americans; about 5 percent of the U.S. population has asthma. The highest proportion of asthma is among children age 5 to 14, a total of 5 million children. Childhood asthma has increased by more than 40 percent since 1980. Many researchers have looked at the growing number of childhood vaccines as a likely cause of the rise in childhood asthma. Several clinical studies have confirmed an association between vaccination and asthma. In these studies, vaccinated children have a higher incidence of asthma compared to those unvaccinated. Medications given to children early in life also have a significant effect on the incidence of asthma. Children given antibiotics or acetaminophen (Tylenol) at some time prior to age 4 were nearly twice as likely to develop asthma when compared to a control group. Low income level has also proven to be associated with childhood asthma. In a study undertaken by the Harlem Children's Zone, more than 2,000 children were tested for asthma. All children under 13 who lived within a twenty-

Allergies and Asthma—Excerpt from *Child Health Guide*, North Atlantic Books, 2005

four-square block area of Central Harlem were tested, and 26 percent had evidence of asthma, five times the national average. Additionally, healthful nutrition is an important deterrent to the development of asthma in children.

The Holistic Solution

The solution to allergic and asthmatic conditions lies in the realm of holistic medical care. Allergies can be significantly improved, and even cured, with holistic treatment. Homeopathic constitutional medicine is the most profound and direct way to stimulate a healing reaction and overcome immune system susceptibilities. Children's immune mechanisms can also be strengthened using a combination of nutritional supplements and Chinese herbal treatment. Treating asthma with holistic approaches can be complex and needs to be carefully managed. Children cannot stop their medications suddenly. A number of safe and effective herbal formulas exist that can control asthma in children and simultaneously strengthen the immune system to prevent further attacks. The Chinese Modular Solutions (CMS) formulas Open Air, Deep Breath, and Chest Relief, all developed for pediatric use, are especially effective in managing asthma without drugs. Homeopathic medicines prescribed for acute symptoms will also supplement the use of these herbal formulas. Parents can also learn tui na techniques on the Lung and Ren channels and back shu points that will help to relax the airway, relieve coughing, and clear phlegm.

Nutritional support for asthma is especially important, including adequate supplies of vitamins A, C, D, and E, colostrum, magnesium, and an omega-3 fatty acid supplement. Several important Chinese herbal formulations can also help bolster immunity in children, especially those combinations that tonify the Stomach and Spleen. Grow and Thrive by CMS is an important pediatric for-

mula for this purpose.

Other treatment methods that can improve lung function and create a healthy balance in the body for energy to flow properly include acupuncture, and chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation.

Finally, the emotional and energetic component of asthma treatment should not be neglected. The field of psychoneuro-immunology has revealed the important connection between emotions and the immune system. Self-regulation techniques that develop a relaxation state include guided imagery, biofeedback, and simple deep abdominal breathing. These methods can help prevent asthma reactions. Children proficient in these skills can also relieve asthmatic symptoms when they occur. One of the primary mechanisms of asthma is the constriction of smooth muscle fibers that encircle the airway tubes. When the mind is calm, when skeletal muscles are relaxed, and when breathing is deep and regular, these muscles that constrict air flow will also relax and allow children to breathe more freely. Regular exercise, swimming, and dance training have also been shown to increase lung capacity and reduce asthma episodes.

This holistic approach to asthma will strengthen the immune system and lung function, prevent the airway inflammation characteristic of asthma, relieve the muscle constriction that impairs breathing, decrease mucus production in airways, and create a balanced energy flow that allows the lungs to do their job without impairment.

Dr. Neustaedter will be teaching a workshop on the holistic treatment of children's respiratory conditions, including asthma on Friday, October 20.

