

Healing Asthma

Asthma is chronic inflammatory lung disease of the airways of the lungs. It is thought to be caused by both environmental and genetic factors. When a patient has asthma, their airways become inflamed and red, and sensitive to irritation and allergic reactions. Chronic inflammation results in increased contractility of airways, or bronchospasms, and reversible airway obstruction. Symptoms include cough, tightness, and short of breath. There are different classifications of the severity of asthma, based on how often symptoms occur, how often medications are needed to control symptoms, lung function, and exacerbations requiring the use of corticosteroids.

There are many causes and etiological factors for asthma:

1. Environmental allergies are a common cause. More than half of the people with asthma have allergies to outdoor pollutants, indoor and outdoor mold, cockroach droppings, dust mites, pets that harbor dander, dried saliva, urine, etc.
2. Food allergens can cause asthma. Food allergens involve an abnormal reaction to proteins in the affected person by foods that are normally safe and harmless. These can cause inflammatory cascade in the body. More than one third of kids with food allergies have asthma. Common food allergens include wheat, corn, dairy, eggs, soy, however there are many other foods that can cause issues.
3. Airborne irritants such as dust, smoke, heavy outdoor air pollution, strong odors, and byproducts of combustion can also trigger asthma.
4. GERD is also highly associated with asthma, and more than 75% of patients with asthma have GERD.
5. Other contributors include vertebral fixations, stress,

anxiety, respiratory infections, and very hot or very cold air.

Conventional testing for asthma and allergies include skin prick, or IgE environmental allergen testing, spirometry readings to measure the amount of air that gets into and out of lungs, pulse oximetry to measure the amount of oxygen in the blood, and forced expiratory volume. Spirometry tests can be diagnostic and used to help patients determine when to go to the hospital.

A Naturopathic Physician has additional tests and evaluation tools to evaluate the cause of asthma and allergies.

These include:

1. Have patients complete a diet and symptom diary,
2. Change from a pro-inflammatory to an anti-inflammatory diet
3. Serum IgG food allergy testing to look for delayed food allergens and then removing them from the diet
4. Adding nutrients that help heal lungs, including antioxidants.
5. Measuring the home for pollution and mold content
6. Evaluate patients for spinal manipulation or massage
7. Identify mental or emotional issues that may trigger asthma. In Mind-Body, the lungs are often associated with mourning and grief.

Standard conventional treatments for asthma are dependent on the severity. If someone has mild intermittent asthma, 2 days per week or less, they will typically be instructed to use a short acting albuterol inhaler. If the asthma is classified as mild/persistent, they may add in a low-dose inhaled corticosteroid. The inhaled corticosteroids have some long term negative effects, including

adrenal stress, suppressed immune system, weight gain, osteoporosis, etc. Another treatment includes using leukotriene inhibitors, such as Singulair, to stop the inflammatory cascade in the lungs which cause swelling and tightening during an attack. If specific environmental allergens are identified with IgE skin testing, a patient can work to avoid these allergens, and can use subcutaneous immunotherapy (weekly allergy shots for a period of 3-5 years at a Physician's office).

Naturopathic treatments include:

1. Improving diet to remove pro-inflammatory foods such as highly processed foods, clean it up in healthier ways, less refined sugar, less sodium, less agri-industry meat.
2. Remove food allergens identified with the serum IgG test
3. Basic nutrient repletion is usually recommended. This includes a good multiple vitamin and mineral formula, adding fish oil to help reduce airway inflammation, adding magnesium to help reduce bronchospasms, and adding vitamin C, and bioflavonoids and quercetin to help prevent mast cell degranulation which leads to the inflammatory cascade. Other natural anti-inflammatories include ginger and curcumin. NAC is another supplement that helps thin the mucus in the lungs, and also helps to detox the body. Herbs that can be helpful include lobelia, yerba santa, licorice, and marshmallow. Essential oil treatments can be used in a steam inhalation, typically with eucalyptus or lavender.
4. If seasonal allergies are persistent, then either homeopathic allergy drops or sublingual immunotherapy can be considered to further help with these issues. Sublingual immunotherapy works in the same way as the weekly allergy shots, which are designed to gradually

desensitize the person from environmental allergens. The sublingual method usually reduces the overall time for treatment by 1-2 years, and does not require weekly trips to the Physicians office for shots. This results in significant savings of time and money in the long run.

5. Green Up The House: things can be done to help 'green up' the indoor household air and reduce triggers and allergens. These include replacing chemical cleaners with vinegar and baking soda, eliminating use of candles and air fresheners, replacing carpets with tile, and using non-VOC paints and finishes. There are also plants that can be used to clean indoor air, which are listed on our website. Also, since homes are much more air-tight than they used to be (to improve energy efficiency), there is more of a buildup of indoor pollutants so on low pollen days, open up doors and windows to reduce indoor pollution.
6. Physical adjustments to properly align the vertebra in the thoracic region, since all the nerves used for breathing run through this area. Work spaces can be evaluated for improved ergonomics and proper posture.
7. Acupuncture can be a valuable tool for opening up lung meridians.
8. Homeopathy can also be powerful to identify a remedy that most closely matches the person and their symptoms to help rebalance health and help clear lungs.

The healing protocol offered by the physicians at AIMS is truly comprehensive and effective. If you or a friend or loved one has asthma, referring them to AIMS for care would be very beneficial.