

## **THE NATURAL APPROACH TO ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA**

**By Dr. Sharon L. Fitelson**

**Many people suffer from allergies and asthma their entire lives and never actually get better. Conventional medicine teaches us how to manage the symptoms with medications, inhalers, and, unfortunately emergency room visits. The medicines often cause a dependency making it hard to stop them and sometimes the drugs can even cause irritability, often causing another episode. The bronchodilator inhalers, antiinflammatory drugs, and antihistamines often lose their effectiveness and then even stronger, newer, prescriptions are written. How can we break the vicious cycle? To find the cause we must first understand the problem.**

**Allergies are basically an immune system deficiency. Why can two people be in St Louis which is full of mold and only one of them is allergic? It's not the mold, but the immune system. The adrenal glands secrete our bodies own natural defense system in the form of hormones known as corticosteroids. These hormones neutralize the irritant and prevent the invasion of symptoms. If the immune system is weakened or compromised, the body fails to recognize or remove the harmful agent. We need to keep our immune system as strong as possible.**

**Substances that cause an allergic reaction are called allergens. Sensitivity occurs when the body overreacts to an allergen and produces too many chemicals called histamines to counteract it. The common reaction then becomes red and or runny eyes, irritated mucous membranes, pounding in the head, sore throats, etc. Antihistamines are often prescribed to counter these effects. In most cases they dry up the nasal passages and decrease the discomfort from itching. They do not however, build the immune system to cause change to the underlying problem, leaving people chemically dependent and susceptible to side effects.**

**Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the bronchioles of the lungs. Triggered by stress, chemicals, pollen, dust, animals, exercise, weather change, infections, food allergies and air pollution, to name a few, the bronchioles swell with mucous and go into spasm. The ensuing breathlessness creates a very tight chest, labored breathing and wheezing. Episodes can be life threatening and often end up in the**

**emergency room. 17 million Americans suffer with Asthma, more than doubling since 1988. Under the age of 5, it is up 160% since 1986. Although treatable, it is becoming more and more common. In the past 20 years the number of cases around the world has doubled.**

**Conventional medical treatment is aimed at keeping inflammation down and relaxing muscle spasm. There are inhalers, often steroids, which are quite successful at minimizing the occurrences and or the severity of the episodes. Depending on each individual case they are used daily or just during a stressful situation. Unfortunately, long term steroid use will depress the immune system, thin bones and cause a host of other problems. While sometimes effective, it is important to search for ways to prevent the disorder and to strengthen the bodies own defense system.**

**As a Wholistic Physician utilizing Chiropractic Medicine, Acupuncture and Nutritional counseling, I have seen great results in the area of asthma and allergy over 23 years. I will explain the rationale for these treatments and hopefully inspire anyone who is suffering to at least add some of these modalities to your treatment protocol, if not to make them your first line of defense.**

**Chiropractic medicine is based on the premise that removing interference to the nervous system at the spinal level will enhance overall health. The spinal cord sends electrical nerve impulses from the brain down to the entire body. Exiting the spinal cord are peripheral nerves that supply the body with information. The peripheral nerves can be divided into three branches, sensory, motor and viscerosomatic. It is the viscerosomatic nerves that comprise the sympathetic nervous system and enervate our organs such as the lungs, thymus, and the adrenal glands.**

**Asthma can be due to a neurological or intrinsic factor. Ample research documents the intimate connection between the spinal column and the respiratory system. The phrenic nerve exits the cervical or neck vertebrae at C3,4 and 5, and goes directly to the diaphragm which is the primary muscle used in breathing. The secondary muscles of respiration are the trapezius, scalene, sternocleidomastoid, and pectorals. They are all relaxed and properly enervated when the neck vertebrae are in their proper alignment.**

**The neurological component of asthma which creates the inflammation inside of the bronchioles can also be linked to the deficiency in immune function, thereby allowing for a hyper-irritability which causes mucous production followed by bronchospasm. Chiropractic has been shown to enhance immune function by enhancing nerve flow in the cervical and thoracic areas to both of the thymus and adrenal glands.**

**Allergies are often a hypersensitivity due to a deficiency in the corticosteroid production of our adrenal glands or an imbalance in the thymic production of T cells. Other immune cells such as cytokenes, natural killer cells and B lymphocytes need to be in balance as well. Chiropractic correction to the corresponding nerve interference helps to keep these cells protecting us and neutralizing the toxic substances that create our allergic reactions. The Chiropractic approach to allergies and asthma is natural and does not try to stimulate or inhibit normal body function. It simply allows the body to heal itself by way of free flow of nervous system energy.**

**We cannot afford to put toxic, processed, irradiated food into our bodies and expect them to function optimally. Many of us are allergic to these foods and that alone can trigger asthma or allergies. In order for our immune function to be optimal we need to be nourishing our adrenal and thymus glands. Bad food is a stress to the adrenal glands and creates an unhealthy secretion of cortisol which then reduces our immune system. Good food, primarily a diet rich in antioxidants, enzymes and fiber will stimulate the immune system favorably.**

**Disease and aging are fast forwarded by the invasion of free radicals which are unstable electrons created by oxidative stress from pollution, chemicals, medications, emotional stress and, once again, bad food. Oxidative stress will cause arthritis, heart disease, nervous system disorders and immune problems, all of which seem to be causing us problems in epidemic proportions as we age.**

**Oxidative stress is reduced by antioxidants, especially those found in fresh raw fruits and vegetables. Every different color of fruit or vegetable has 10-12,000 antioxidants in them, far more than you would ever get from a vitamin pill or the medicine cabinet full of supplements that so many of us take. The adrenal glands flourish in this**

**environment of antioxidants, especially when they are complemented by minerals, enzymes, soluble and insoluble fiber as found in nature. The minerals are necessary for the hormones to get across the cell wall and for all metabolism to take place. The enzymes found in the raw food will help in digestion as well as in the immune function directly. Soluble fiber helps to keep our cholesterol down and keeps fat from sticking to the arterial walls, bringing it to the liver where it can be properly metabolized. Insoluble fiber helps to keep our bowels functioning better so we can absorb our nutrients from the food.**

**Acupuncture is a philosophy, not just a treatment modality, having been known to civilization for 2500 years. The premise of this ancient healing art is to enhance the flow of Chi, or life energy, through stimulation of certain points on the body. If Yin and Yang are balanced then Chi can flow through it and health will be restored. Acupuncturists decide what to treat by using tongue and pulse diagnosis as well as other modalities depending on the practitioner.**

**Relative to the immune system, in Chinese medicine we are looking to enhance the flow of Chi in the lung, large intestine, spleen and stomach meridians to begin with. We are also interested in removing liver stagnation and build up of phlegm in the channels. Overall we are interested in creating balance in all of the 14 main meridians so health can be restored. Each individual is unique and there is no set pattern. Symptoms can be relieved quite quickly, and it is the underlying pattern that may take a while to correct. Some practitioners use needles only while others use gentle electric stimulation, laser, pressure, and massage.**

**In conclusion, it should be noted that allergies and asthma are a reaction to a stimulant or allergen, and it is the reaction that is the problem. If we detoxify our bodies and strengthen the forces within us, we can feel much better. A healthy immune system means high resistance to disease and infection, an enhanced ability to deal with environmental stresses, and greater health and well-being.**

**If your symptoms are terrible, consider adding one or all of the modalities to your medication and then gently weaning yourself off of them. If your symptoms are seasonal, use them as a preventative measure before they start. If you have no symptoms and just want to be**

**and stay as healthy as possible, you can as well derive benefit from a good diet, an acupuncture assessment and a Chiropractic check up. Remember that life is not a dress rehearsal. Be as healthy as you can and feel as good as possible!!**

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