

CONTROLLING ASTHMA

Staying Healthy with Dr. Aieta, N.D.

Dear Dr. Aieta,
My 14-year-old son suffers from severe asthma, and although the inhalers and medications keep his symptoms somewhat under control, I just don't like him taking so many drugs. Is there a more natural approach that would help with his symptoms and allow him to get off some of these medications?

Stacy G.

I have found that – in both adults and children – asthma can often be controlled by avoiding allergenic foods and chemicals and by taking nutritional supplements.

It seems like every article I write I am stressing the removal of allergenic foods in treating disease, but time and again, I find that proper food choices play a critical role in preventing and treating disease. In rare cases, patients also need to be treated for a defect in their ability to detoxify substances found in food and drink called sulfites. Many of my patients who respond to a nutritional approach may be able to discontinue or greatly reduce their medications.

I've found, through doing elimination diets followed by challenging certain foods to see a reaction, that the most common foods that provoke asthma include dairy products, eggs, chocolate, wheat,

corn, citrus fruits and fish. Tartrazine (yellow dye No. 5), a common food additive, is thought to trigger asthma in about 100,000 Americans. Clinically, I have seen patients' symptoms greatly improve once this chemical is removed from their diets.

Sulfites are another class of chemicals that can trigger asthma in susceptible individuals. Sulfites are found in many wines and other alcoholic beverages and are often used as a preservative at restaurant salad bars.

Taking nutritional supplements can be helpful in treating asthma. The first two supplements that I always try with asthmatics are magnesium and vitamin B6. Interestingly, many of the drugs that are commonly used to treat asthma can actually deplete these two essential nutrients.

In numerous lab studies, it has been shown that children with asthma showed a very high prevalence of B6 deficiency. Once the deficiency was corrected, the children had significantly fewer symptoms and attacks and required far less medication.

Magnesium is another nutrient asthmatic patients are often deficient in. It works to relax the bronchial muscles in the lungs and helps prevent the release of histamine in the blood stream. I make sure that all my



asthmatic patients have adequate levels of magnesium in their system.

For patients who have difficulty detoxifying sulfites, I use Vitamin B12 and the trace mineral molybdenum. Both of these nutrients work extremely well for patients with sulfite-induced asthma.

A lot can be done for asthmatics besides taking prescription drugs. If doctors paid more attention to the nutritional approach, we would definitely see a decrease in the number of cases of asthma. It is important to remember that asthma is a serious condition and that any nutritional program should be properly supervised by a medical practitioner – preferably one trained in nutrition, like a naturopathic physician.

Dr. Frank Aieta is a board-certified and licensed Naturopathic Physician with a private practice in West Hartford, Conn. He specializes in the treatment of disease, using natural therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, spinal manipulation, clinical nutrition, and herbal medicine. You can e-mail him at DrAieta@aol.com, or visit www.DrAieta.com.

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