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New Year. New Hope!

The new year is a great time to take a fresh look at all the advances in asthma and allergy care. The new research and treatments announced in issues of *freshAAIR™* last year give us all hope for a healthier and happier 2005. AAFA is here to help in the search for cures, inform and educate consumers, and serve patients like you. But to continue these services, we need your financial support. Please consider donating to AAFA online at www.aafa.org, or designate AAFA when you make your Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) or United Way contributions this year. Together, we can help more people live a "life without limits!"

Best wishes for good health.
Ben Hadden, AAFA president



Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America®

Allergic Asthma 101

So, you have asthma, but is it "allergic asthma?"

First, you need to know all about allergic asthma. Allergic asthma occurs when a person's asthma is triggered by exposure to an allergen. About 50 percent of people with asthma have an allergic trigger.

What are the major differences between allergic asthma and non-allergic asthma? Allergic asthma is different because symptoms are triggered by allergen exposure. Allergens are protein particles that activate the immune system, like tree, grass or weed pollen. Avoidance as well as anti-allergic treatments will help you manage this problem. But cigarette smoke, strong perfumes, dirt, wood dust and paint fumes are a few examples of "irritants," not allergens. Irritants can also trigger asthma although they do not activate an immune response. "Because exposure to these substances does not activate the immune system, avoidance is the best remedy," said Dr. Derek Johnson, an allergist at Temple University Children's Medical Center.

Which allergens bother people with allergic asthma?

Perennial, or year-round, allergens include dust mites, animal dander, mold spores, cockroaches, rodents, dander, and others. "Seasonal allergens, such as tree, grass or weed pollen, cause the familiar 'hay fever' symptoms. But if a person with allergic asthma is exposed to these allergens, an asthma attack can also be triggered," Johnson said.

"The most important advice for allergic asthma patients is avoidance."

What is IgE and what does it have to do with allergic asthma? IgE, or Immunoglobulin E, is the antibody that recognizes allergens and triggers the immune system to begin removing the "invading" allergen. "If you have asthma, the inflammation that surrounds this immune system process can push you into an asthma attack," Johnson said.



“He told me that this would help me breathe, and it would probably lesson the amount of medication I was taking.”

New Therapy Helps Allergic Asthma Patient

Marie Coleman has a lot of experience with allergic asthma. “I’ve probably had allergic asthma all my life, but I was diagnosed with it in 1994 and I’ve been treated for it since then,” says the mother of three in Phoenix, Ariz. For several years her treatment included a broad array of medications and frequent hospitalizations. “I was going to the hospital every month, a minimum of once a month, in those 10 years.” Adding a nebulizer to her home treatment reduced the hospitalizations but did not eliminate them. “That helped control it to some degree, but I was still, on average, going to the hospital at least once every four months.”

In the hospital, her treatment would be aggressive and urgent. “They would put me on IVs, and they would put me back on corticosteroids. And they would put me on a breathing machine, trying to control my asthma and trying to open up my lungs. And I could depend on staying at the

hospital at least eight hours any time that I would go, and hope that it would work.” But the treatment didn’t always work. “There were times that it didn’t work and I would be sent home and I would turn around and have to go right back. Because I would get home and I couldn’t breathe.”

That all changed about a year ago when someone recommended a new pulmonologist to Marie. “I went to the pulmonologist here in town and he tried again to give me all the medications that everybody normally gets. And he knew about Xolair and so he suggested that I try that. He told me that this would help me breathe, and it would probably lessen the amount of medication that I was taking.” Marie is very pleased with the results of her new therapy. “Since I’ve been on Xolair it’s been wonderful. I can go out of the house; I don’t live in the bed anymore. The kids and I went to Disneyland and I wasn’t sick. I can now travel and I couldn’t before.”

Ask THE ALLERGIST™

Your Questions,
AAFA’s Answers.

Question — My healthy 3-year-old daughter became sick with a viral infection, then sinus infection. Due to the runny nose, watery eyes and wheezing, my allergist said she has allergies and wants to do allergy testing. She seems to be responding to the medicine, so is the testing even needed? I also don’t understand how she all of a sudden has allergies when she has always been extremely healthy and our lifestyle and environment hasn’t changed.

Answer — Your daughter is at an age when allergies often start to show. The point of allergy testing is so you can identify the exact allergens that trigger her symptoms and work on specific avoidance measures. You may eventually wish to look at allergy shots as a way of decreasing the need for medications all of the time.

Question — I have been on allergy shots for a year now. During that time, my allergies have gotten worse. During that time, I have also gotten a dog and a cat. I went to get allergy tests today, and the dog and cat both showed up on Level 1 and Level 2 tests. My doctor is now going to add dog and cat into my shot serum. In your opinion, do you think it will help to get rid of one of the pets and keep the other? I am not at the point yet where I can get rid of both, but I could get rid of one.

Answer — I would remove both pets from your bedroom and keep them out at all times, but I would give the shots a try before you get rid of your pets entirely. Make sure that you are working with a board-certified allergist and that he or she is giving you a high dose of immunotherapy.

Question — Is there a preferred method of anesthesia when you have asthma?

Answer — As long as your asthma is controlled, it should not matter. However, spinal and epidural generally cause less concern than general anesthesia.

Question — My infant daughter had an asthma attack for the first time a couple of nights ago. She was diagnosed with asthma last year and is on daily medication. When she had the attack I gave her albuterol, which helped. I took her to the doctor yesterday because she still has a persistent cough. The doctor told me to keep giving her albuterol. If she is not in distress, then why am I still having to use it?

Answer — The cough is part of her asthma and the albuterol will help with that. I often have my patients double the dose of certain medications during asthma flares. Ask her doctor before you decide what is best.

“The point of allergy testing is to identify the exact allergens that trigger your symptoms.”



Submit your questions to “Ask the Allergist™” online at www.aafa.org in the “Ask the Allergist” section. Our expert is Jeff Wald, M.D., a board-certified allergist with Kansas City Allergy & Asthma Associates, P.A. He received his allergy, asthma and clinical immunology training at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Denver and received his board certification for allergy and clinical immunology in 1987. This information is not a substitute for a visit with your doctor. Always consult a medical professional before making changes or adjustments to your long-term asthma and allergy treatment plan.



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America®

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Allergy Symptoms

Allergies are characterized by an over-reaction of the immune system to certain substances ("allergens") that a person inhales (pollen, dust mites, etc.), eats (peanuts, shellfish, etc.), injects (bee stings, certain medicines, etc.) or touches (poison ivy, latex, etc.). Symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose (clear discharge)
- Itchy nose or throat
- Coughing
- Skin rashes or hives

Asthma Symptoms

Asthma occurs when airways become temporarily blocked or narrowed due to exposure to allergens ("allergic asthma"), irritants, strenuous exercise, anxiety or other triggers. If an asthma attack is severe, a person may need emergency treatment. Symptoms include:

- Sudden shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Tight chest
- Wheezing or coughing

Asthma and allergies are serious chronic diseases affecting more than 60 million people in the United States. Both can be fatal. However, with proper management, people with asthma and allergies can lead healthy, productive lives. Visit www.aafa.org (and www.allergyactionplan.com) to find out more.

"A new coalition... is forming to address the danger of mass-produced pharmacy compounds."

Research: Research Grants From AAFA

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) funds worthwhile basic and clinical research involving the pathophysiology and management of asthma and allergic diseases. Since the 1980s, AAFA has provided a series of Investigator Award Grants under this program; a significant majority of AAFA's grant recipients have subsequently received grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or other large institutional funding. Today, AAFA offers two-year, \$20,000/year grants to select investigators who have applied to NIH for grant assistance and whose applications

have received high merit review but which NIH is unable to fund. All candidate names for these awards are provided to AAFA by NIH, and final awardees are selected by a panel of scientists identified by AAFA under the direction of AAFA's Vice Presidents of Research Medical Scientific Council. This bridge-grant funding is intended to allow the investigator to collect more data in the specific area so as to reapply to NIH in a better competitive situation. Early in 2005, AAFA hopes to fund two such grants, to be selected from a field of meritorious candidates.

Advocacy: AAFA Joins Alliance for Safe Medications

A new coalition of patients, physicians and technicians is forming to address the danger of mass-produced pharmacy compounds being marketed and distributed to patients who rely on nebulized medicines to manage their respiratory diseases. The new group will be known as the Consumer Health Alliance for Safe Medications (CHASM).

Traditional drug compounding involves the legitimate modification by pharmacists of products approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This is often necessary to meet the unique needs of a patient and is typically practiced with full consent of both the patient and the treating physician.

A shadow manufacturing industry has emerged, however, where

compounded products are now mass produced and distributed to consumers without such consent and without the rigid labeling or packaging required of FDA-approved products. The legality of this growing business practice is questionable in part because the FDA has been unable to strengthen its regulations and oversight of these products. In the meantime, some patients are receiving respiratory medicines designed to look like the real thing, but that may lack the proper potency or dosage and in some cases have led directly to patient harm.

The mission of CHASM is to work with the FDA and other relevant authorities to raise awareness about this emerging threat. Please contact Mo Mayrides at mo@aafa.org if you would like to know more about this important new effort.

Education: Get AAIRwaves™ Newsletter for Teens

AAIRwaves™ is the perfect newsletter for adolescents in your home, clinic or school! A free, bimonthly publication for teens and their caregivers, AAIRwaves™ is full of fun stories, tips, games and useful information. Each issue is filled with suggestions on prevention and treatment, testimonials and ideas from other teens, and more, all in an eye-catching and easy-to-read format. Call 1.800.ASTHMA or use the order form below to start getting your FREE subscription today.



Order Form:

Order AAIRwaves™ today, and visit the "Education" section at www.aafa.org to learn about and order educational programs and materials about asthma and allergies.

How To Order:

Complete the order form below and mail to AAFA, 1233 20th Street, NW, Suite 402, Washington, D.C. 20036, or fax to 202.466.8940, 24 hours a day. Or call toll-free 1.800.7.ASTHMA (1.800.727.8462), Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. Or order online at www.aafa.org.

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AAFA on the Web

www.aafa.org

You can always find the latest information about asthma and allergies, watch free interactive educational videos and even "Ask the Allergist™" on our Web site.



Nationwide Asthma Screenings

The American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) is conducting free asthma screenings at more than 300 locations across the country. Visit www.acaai.org/public or call 1.800.7.ASTHMA for more information.

Racing for a Worthy Cause

Racing for Children's Asthma is dedicated to the treatment of asthma in children. The nonprofit organization donates spacers and peak flow meters to children in need. To request peak flow meters or spacers, write to rfca3tony@aol.com or visit www.rfca3.com.



Look for the AAFA Seal

AAFA does not endorse commercial products, but look for our "seal of truth" to help you recognize truthful product claims. Products with the AAFA seal have been reviewed by a panel of independent medical and scientific experts to ensure that claims are research-based and honest. Make sure you speak with your doctor before you buy any products.



Allergic Asthma continued from cover

What are the treatment options for allergic-asthma? "There isn't a cure for asthma — but it can be controlled," Johnson said. "If you know what triggers your asthma you can avoid it, which is crucial." Your doctor can do a series of simple tests to determine if you have allergic asthma and exactly what allergens trigger your asthma.

After you identify the allergens that bother you, you should avoid them. "The most important piece of advice for allergic asthma patients is avoidance. Stay away from the allergens that cause symptoms, because when you are near an allergen you will have a reaction. If you know cat dander triggers an asthma attack, stay away from cats or remove them from your home," Johnson said.

If avoidance isn't working, talk to your doctor about which medications you can try. "There are allergy medications, antihistamines and immunotherapy, such as allergy shots, nose sprays or inhaled corticosteroids for asthma." For people with severe allergic asthma, a

new treatment is available. "Anti-IgE medication, such as Xolair, is a novel therapy that removes the antibodies in your blood, preventing the asthma symptoms from occurring. Since IgE is the antibody that causes the allergic reaction to happen, using an anti-IgE medication will help reduce the effect of your allergen triggers," Johnson said.

Does allergic asthma affect children in a different way than adults? Yes, and the treatment strategy is different. For instance, Xolair is FDA-approved for children ages 10 and up. "It's important for parents to pay attention to children's allergens to reduce their symptoms and keep allergic asthma under control," Johnson said.

How can I become educated about allergic asthma? To stay on top of allergic asthma, ask your doctor about your allergens and the best way to avoid them.

Also visit www.aafa.org for more information about allergies and asthma.

"Sound Advice" for Parents

Every child experiences the ups and downs of growing up, and children with chronic diseases have even more hurdles to overcome. But help and encouragement come in many shapes and sizes, including 2 inches by 4 inches!

A cute new tool called "Medi-NoteNiks for Kids With Asthma," from a company

named Sound Advice, is a clever note pad covered with colorful cartoons of kids talking to kids about asthma. Each cartoon has an educational and encouraging message. Parents can rip off one note a day to put in their child's lunch box, tape on the refrigerator or computer, or post anywhere. Get more information and see samples at www.noteniks.com.

aaafa AROUND AMERICA

AAFA Chapter & Educational Support Group News

Washington State Chapter (www.aafawa.org)

Meet AAFA's Washington State Chapter, serving the entire state of Washington and parts of Oregon. Program highlights for the Washington State Chapter include trainings for health care professionals on asthma and allergy management. In addition, the chapter works collaboratively with other local and regional agencies to improve the quality of

life for people affected by asthma and allergies. And the Washington Chapter organizes health fairs and other public events to provide educational information, materials and products.

Contact Penny Nelson, executive director, at 1.800.778.2232 or by e-mail at aafawa@aafawa.org.



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AAFA Educational Support Groups
Visit www.aafa.org to find Educational Support Groups near you.



Be Allergy-Free on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is the holiday when foods such as chocolates, strawberries and candies are used to show love. For those with food allergies, this means navigating a minefield of allergy triggers. Here are a few ideas to take the focus off food, so you can enjoy the holiday too.

- Watch home videos and host a romantic movie marathon, or go to a movie theater.
- Check local museums and theaters for Valentine-related exhibits or performances.
- Host a Valentine's Day party at your child's school, and plan food-free activities such as making paper Valentine chains, writing poems and more.
- Help your child create homemade cards using craft paper, glitter, paints or markers.
- If you must include food, bake a special allergy-free cake or make allergy-free chocolate to share. (Visit www.foodallergy.org and click on "Allergy-Free Recipes" for free recipes.)

As always, keep medicine on hand in case of an unexpected reaction. If you have an EpiPen®, be sure it is kept at room temperature (between 59 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit) during cold winter months because extreme temperatures can make the medication less effective.

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