

The Wellness Family

Dr. Roller Keeps You Informed

Asthma And Your Child

In September of 2004, the American Lung Association reported that nearly 20 million Americans were suffering from asthma, 6 million of which are under the age of 18. In 1998, the reported number of children suffering from this same disease was just over 4 million; this is an increase of almost 2 million diagnosed cases of asthma in less than six years.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is characterized as a chronic inflammation of the lung airways causing the following symptoms:

- Coughing
- Tightness in the chest
- Wheezing or shortness of breath

Asthma is the leading serious chronic condition in children, and the number one cause of school absences and pediatric hospitalizations when compared to other serious childhood conditions. It is also responsible for more than 4,000 deaths each year as, at its most severe, life-threatening asthma attacks are known to result in respiratory failure and require ventilator support in a pediatric intensive care unit. The cost in direct medical care and indirect expenses totals more than \$16.1 billion each year.

What are the Symptoms?

During an acute asthma attack, the child typically:

- Appears anxious
- Exhibits wheezing and painful or labored breathing

The reduced airflow combined with the presence of mucus, results in wheezing when the child exhales. Children have described this sensation as trying to breathe through a bent straw, while others have said it's like being a fish out of water.

Who is at Risk?

Although it cannot be accurately predicted who will develop asthma, there are some children who may be at higher risk. Triggering mechanisms for asthma can include pollen, asthma may be associated with the increased level of pollution in our environment.

Asthma Linked to Early Antibiotic Usage

In October of 2003, *Health Day News* reported that researchers have linked antibiotic use in infancy to the later development of allergies and asthma. This was based on a study that followed 488 children from infancy to the age of 7 in the Michigan-area beginning in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The results were released during a conference of the European Respiratory Society in Vienna, Austria.

While it's not clear whether the antibiotics directly cause allergies, it is clear that the rate of development of allergies and asthma is directly affected by their use in infants.



"Asthma is the leading serious chronic condition in children."

According to Dr. Goldstein, it's estimated that 20 to 25 percent of American children suffer from allergies, while 5 to 7 percent have asthma, both of which are signs that the body's immune system is overreacting to foreign invaders.

The results of this study were informative. The researchers found that about 38% of the older children showed signs of allergies to pets, ragweed, grass and dust mites and 5% had asthma. Almost half of those surveyed had taken antibiotics in the first six months of life and were 1.5 times more likely to develop allergies and 2.5 times more likely to develop asthma.

Asthma Linked to Food Allergies

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology estimates that more than 70% of people with asthma also suffer from allergies. In addition, the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* reported in July of 2003 that researchers have concluded that there is a link between food allergies and life-threatening asthma attacks in children.

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The research team at St. Mary's hospital, led by Gideon Lack, compared two groups of pediatric patients with asthma. The first group of 19 children were hospitalized and on ventilators due to severe life-threatening asthma. The second group of 38 children had milder asthma.

According to the results of the study, more than 50% of the children with life-threatening asthma had food allergies (especially to peanuts), compared with only 10% of the control group, raising the questions of whether life-threatening asthma attacks may be triggered by food allergies.

"This study stresses the importance of detailed allergy investigations in asthmatic children," said Lack. "This should allow pediatricians to identify a group of children at risk for severe reactions and the potential cause for severe asthma in certain children."

Common Treatment for Asthma

Unfortunately, there is no "cure" for asthma; the only treatment is to control its symptoms. For those types of asthma that are triggered by allergies, avoiding substances that produce the allergic reaction is important.

The primary medical approach is drug therapy; however, when considering the use of drugs to manage your child's asthma, it is important to weigh the potential benefits against the risks. Although the treatment of asthma by medication is common, there may be other health complications associated with this approach. Simply put: all drugs have side effects and asthma medications are no different. Side effects include but are not limited to:

- Nausea, diarrhea and indigestion
- Diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems

- Weight gain and potential reproductive problems
- Suppression of the immune system

Drugs in the steroid family are a typical treatment for acute asthmatic episodes. Inhalers are often used in early stages of the disease, or for minor attacks. These "bronchodilators" are used to help ease the restriction to the airway. Unfortunately, many patients find it necessary to continue using inhalers throughout their lives.

Can Chiropractic Help?

Several clinical trials and studies have noted a positive correlation between Chiropractic care and the patient's perception of relief from their asthma symptoms. In the Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research, the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association in cooperation with the Michigan Council of Chiropractors published a study demonstrating the positive effects of Chiropractic care on 81 children with asthma. The study concluded that Chiropractic care is a safe, drug free, alternative health care approach where the patient perceived improved respiration, improved quality of life and less frequent asthma attacks.

Perhaps most compelling are the personal stories of parents and children who have experienced the benefits firsthand. Many have observed a decrease in the severity of asthma symptoms after implementing a schedule of regular Chiropractic visits.

In Summary

Asthma attacks can be terrifying for a young child and even more so for the parent watching who is battling feelings of helplessness and futility. While Chiropractic cannot promise a cure, your family wellness Chiropractor can give you information on healthier choices for your home and your family's diet that can result in improved health and fewer attacks for your asthmatic child.

Dear Parent,

Dr. Roller is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care and along with that dedication comes an understanding that an informed parent makes wise decisions for their child. So, take a moment to speak with Dr. Roller today regarding any concerns you may have about your child or your family's overall health and wellness.

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