

Healthy Living Newsletter

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Live, Take Charge, Change

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Asthma in America

Every day in America:

- 40,000 people miss school or work due to asthma
- 30,000 people have an asthma attack
- 5,000 people visit the emergency room due to asthma
- 1,000 people are admitted to the hospital due to asthma

Source: www.aafa.org



When to Seek Medical Attention for Asthma

- Coughing that is constant, intermittent, or associated with physical activity
- Wheezing or whistling sounds when your child exhales
- Shortness of breath or rapid breathing that may or may not be associated with exercise
- Complaints of chest tightness.
- Repeated respiratory infections, such as pneumonia or bronchitis

Pay attention to cues from an older child, who may say, "My chest feels funny" or "I am always coughing." Asthma can be worse at night, so listen for coughing during sleep or coughing that wakes your child in the night. Coughing and wheezing may also accompany crying, laughing, yelling, or strong emotional reactions and stress.

Sources: www.lungusa.org



Asthma and Children

- Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease, affecting 6.3 million children.
- Asthma accounts for 14 million lost days of school annually.
- Secondhand smoke can cause serious harm to children. An estimated 400,000 to one million asthmatic children have their condition worsened by exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Asthma is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among those younger than 15 years of age.
- Asthma medications help reduce underlying inflammation in the airways and relieve or prevent airway narrowing.
- Two classes of medications have been used to treat asthma – anti-inflammatory agents and bronchodilators. Anti-inflammatory drugs interrupt the development of bronchial inflammation and have a preventive action. They may also modify or terminate ongoing inflammatory reactions in the airways. A new class of anti-inflammatory medications known as leukotrienes modifiers, which work in a different way by blocking the activity of chemicals called leukotrienes that are involved in airway inflammation, have recently come on the market. Bronchodilators act principally to dilate the airways by relaxing bronchial muscles.

Asthma accounts for many nights of interrupted sleep, limitation of activity, and disruptions to the family and caregiver routine. Asthma symptoms that are not severe enough to require a visit to the emergency room or to a physician can still be severe enough to prevent a child with asthma from living a fully active life.

Sources: www.cdc.gov, & www.lungusa.org

Readings To Know

- **Total Cholesterol:** Less than 200 mg/dL
- **LDL ("bad") cholesterol:** Less than 100 mg/dL
- **HDL ("good") cholesterol:** 60 mg/dL and above
- **Triglycerides:** Less than 150 mg/dL

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood.

- **Body mass index:** Less than 25kg/m

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to both adult men and women

- **Waist circumference:**
Women: 35 inches or less; Men: 40 inches or less (at the belly button)

Sources: www.americanheart.org, www.nhlbi.nih.gov & www.nhlbisupport.com

Stress Relief for Mom

- Determine, no matter what, to schedule time for yourself.
- Roll up the blinds, pull back the curtains, crank the windows open and let the fresh air and sunshine stream in.
- Grab a good book.
- Listen to calm, soothing music on the way to work, while at work and while going to sleep.
- Exercise needs to be a priority.
- Eat healthy.
- Have a sense of humor.

Sources: www.familysanitiesaver.com & www.buzzlw.com



Whole Grains A to Z

Amaranth

Amaranth was a staple of Aztec culture, until Cortez, in an effort to destroy that civilization, decreed that anyone growing the crop would be put to death. Seeds were smuggled out to Asia, where local dialects referred to Amaranth as “king seed” and “seed sent by God” as a tribute to its taste and substance. Amaranth kernels are tiny; when cooked they resemble brown caviar.

Today amaranth is making its way back, thanks to a lively peppery taste and a higher level of protein (16%) than most other grains. Amaranth has no gluten, so it must be mixed with other grains to make leavened bread. It is popular in cereals, breads, muffins, crackers, and pancakes.

Source: www.wholegraincouncil.org

Healthy Living References

NHLBI Health Info. Center
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Cholesterol - Live Healthier, Live Longer
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd

Nutrition – U.S. Department of Agriculture
www.nutrition.gov

Kids Have Stress, Too



We often view our kids as happy-go-lucky. But children also experience stress. Not only do they get anxious about things in their own world, they can be deeply affected by outside factors such as war, natural disasters, and other unsettling events. Contributors can also include family issues such as divorce, death, or a parent’s job loss.

As a parent, you can become attuned to what is a normal amount of anxiety for your child and what is not. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, try the following tips to help your child handle it better:

- **Tune in to their moods.** Pay attention to your child’s behavior. Take the time to talk to your child to get to the root of the problem. When you show concern for their problems and issues, it is reassuring to them, and they will be more responsive to that attention.
- **Watch the same shows they do.** If you have young children, you do not want them watching the doom and gloom of daily news shows. Children’s minds are like sponges and absorb almost everything they see or hear.
- **Focus on the positive.** There is obviously no way a child can be shielded from a major trauma such as a death in the family, a house fire, or a natural disaster. Comfort and reassure them. And as difficult as it may be during very trying times, try to maintain everyday routines.
- **Lead by example.** Children often learn to deal with stress by mimicking how you respond to challenging times. Model healthy behavior during difficult times, such as writing in a journal, de-stressing in a hot bath, sharing how you feel without blaming, or taking a walk.
- **Instill confidence.** When children are young, there are times when you have to come to their defense and help them handle tough situations. As they get older, you also have to let them champion themselves, which builds their confidence to resolve problems. Still, always make sure that your child knows you have got their back.



Eating Right When Eating Out

At restaurants

- Choose entrees, potatoes, and vegetables without sauces, cheese, or butter – or ask for sauces to be put on the side.
- Eat a small portion of meat – fill up on vegetables.
- Avoid vegetable and salad toppings, such as chopped eggs, crumbled bacon, and cheese or tell the waiter you don’t want those items in the dish.
- Ask for soft margarine instead of butter – use it sparingly.
- At Chinese restaurants, look for items that are steamed, jum (poached), kow (roasted), or shu (barbecued). Ask for steamed rice and no MSG.
- At Italian restaurants, look for red sauces, primavera (no cream), picata (lemon), sun-dried tomatoes, or crushed tomatoes, lightly sauteed or grilled.
- At Mexican restaurants, look for spicy chicken, rice, black beans, salsa or picante, or soft corn tortillas.
- If you order pizza, try a vegetable topping, instead of meat or extra cheese.
- At fast food restaurants, order salads, grilled chicken sandwiches with no breading, regular-size hamburgers, or roast beef sandwiches.

Source: www.hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/cholmonth

Health Tip: What Your Bones Need

It is important to practice good bone health when you are young, to prevent problems later in life. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons offers these guidelines:

- **Between ages 10 and 20:**
Get 1,300 milligrams of calcium each day by eating plenty of calcium-rich foods such as cheese and leafy green vegetables. Drink at least three 8-oz. glasses of milk each day.
- **Between ages 20 and 35:**
Get at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium each day. Perform exercises such as jogging or walking to help strengthen bones.
- **Between ages 35 and 50:**
You still need at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium each day as bone loss may have already begun.
- **Age 50 and older:**
Be sure to get at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium each day and at least 20 minutes of weight-bearing exercise three days a week or more. Also, your doctor may recommend a vitamin D supplement.

Source: health.discovery.com

Muscle Cramps

A muscle cramp is a painful, involuntary muscle contraction. Muscle cramps are also sometimes called muscle spasms.

The exact cause of muscle cramps is not well understood. Cramps occur most often in muscles of the leg or foot. They usually occur while playing sports, exercising, or lying in bed. The calf muscle in the back of the lower leg is in a common place for nighttime cramps. These often occur after vigorous exercise. Overexertion and muscle fatigue also contribute to cramping. Excess sweating or dehydration can deplete minerals in the body. Minerals are important for good muscle function and include sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus. Medications such as diuretics (water pills) can also lead to cramping due to loss of sodium and potassium.

Source: health.discovery.com



Facts of Osteoporosis

- This condition is most common in women during menopause. This is because of the reduction in estrogen levels deprives the body of hormone's ability to protect against bone loss.
- Osteoporosis also strikes many elderly men. By age 75 it is equally common in men and women.
- Less frequently, osteoporosis can affect young people, such as teenage girls who do not eat enough, overexert themselves and stop menstruating regularly, a condition known as female athlete triad.
- Osteoporosis is more common in fair-skinned than dark-skinned people.

Source: www.yourttotalhealth.ivillage.com

Mercury Poisoning

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water, and soil. It exists in several forms: elemental or metallic mercury, inorganic mercury compounds, and organic mercury compounds. Elemental or metallic mercury is a shiny, silver-white metal and is liquid at room temperature. It is used in glass thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs, older dental fillings, some electrical switches, and some medical equipment.

Inorganic mercury compounds take the form of mercury salts and are generally white powder or crystals, with the exception of mercuric sulfide (cinnabar) which is red. Inorganic mercury compounds have been included in fungicides, antiseptics, and disinfectants. Some skin lightening and freckle creams, as well as some traditional medicines can contain mercury compounds.

Organic mercury compounds, such as methylmercury, are formed when mercury combines with carbon. Microscopic organisms convert inorganic mercury into methylmercury, which is the most common organic mercury compound found in the environment. Methylmercury accumulates in the food chain, including fish.

The effects of mercury exposure can be very severe, subtle, or may not occur at all, depending on many factors:

- The chemical form of mercury – metallic, inorganic, or organic
- The dose – how much
- The duration of the exposure – how long
- The route of exposure – eating, breathing, injecting, touching
- The specific characteristics of the person – age, health, etc.

The nervous system is very sensitive to all forms of mercury. Methylmercury and metal mercury vapors are more harmful than other forms because more mercury in these forms reaches the brain. Exposure to high levels of metallic, inorganic, or organic mercury can permanently damage the brain, kidneys, and developing fetus. Effects on brain functioning may result in irritability, shyness, tremors, changes in vision or hearing, and memory problems.

Short term exposure to high levels of metallic mercury vapors may cause lung damage, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increases in blood pressure or heart rate, and eye irritation.

Sources: www.epa.gov, & www.nlm.nih.gov

Zinc in Your Diet

Zinc is a mineral that the body needs to help the immune system, in wound healing, and in the breakdown of carbohydrates. Second only to iron in its concentration in the body, zinc is found in protein-rich foods such as meat, peanuts, peanut butter, and legumes.

If you are not getting enough zinc, here is a list of possible warning signs:

- Slow growth rate.
- No appetite.
- Slow-healing wounds on the skin, and persistent infections.
- Hair loss.
- Abnormalities in your ability to taste or smell.
- Difficulty seeing in the dark.
- Insufficient hormone production in men.

Source: www.healthfinder.com

Office Exercise 101

When it is practical, schedule walking meetings or brain storming sessions. Do laps inside your building, or if the weather cooperates, take your meetings outdoors.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com

Hearing Loss Statistics

- Risk factors that may lead to hearing loss: aging, loud noises, heredity, some medications, and some illnesses
- Safe range of common noises:
 - whisper (30 decibels)
 - normal conversation (60 decibels)
 - heavy traffic (80 decibels)
- Risk range of common noises:
 - lawnmower (85 – 90 decibels)
 - tractor (90 decibels)
 - bulldozer (95 – 105 decibels)
- Injury range of common noises:
 - ambulance siren (120 decibels)
 - jet engine (140 decibels),
 - shotgun blast (165 decibels)
 - rocket launch (180 decibels)

Source: www.mayoclinic.com



Spider Bites

You need to be aware of the possibility of spider bites as families and children get out and enjoy the outdoors. The following are tips for care if a bite takes place:

- Wash the area carefully with soap and water. Do this two or three times a day until the skin is healed.
- Apply cool compresses.
- Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain.
- To protect against infection, apply an antibiotic ointment. If you have any reason to suspect a bite by a black widow or brown recluse spider, apply ice to the site and take the individual to the emergency room. Even if the individual doesn't show any symptoms, get medical attention right away.

Most spiders found in the United States are harmless, with the exception of the black widow and the brown recluse spider.

The brown recluse spider has a tiny oval shape, with a small violin form on its back and is found mostly in mid-western and southern parts of the United States. The bites usually do not hurt at first, and the individual might not even be aware of the bite, but in some cases they cause swelling and changes in skin color and a blister.

The black widow spider is found all over North America. It has a shiny black body and an orange hourglass shape on its underbelly. The venom in a black widow bite can cause painful cramps to show up within a few hours of the bite. The cramps can start in the muscles surrounding the bite and then spread. The bite may also lead to nausea, vomiting, chills, fever, and muscle aches. If the individual has any of these symptoms go to the emergency room right away.

Source: www.kidshealth.org



(FAQ) Hearing Loss

Don't we lose our hearing as we age?

It is true that most people's hearing tests get worse as they get older. But for the average person, aging does not cause impaired hearing before at least the age of 60. People who are not exposed to noise and are otherwise healthy keep their hearing for many years. People who are exposed to noise and do not protect their hearing, begin to lose their hearing at an early age,

How often should your hearing be tested?

Anyone regularly exposed to hazardous noise should have an annual hearing test. Also, anyone who notices a change in his or her hearing should have their ears checked. People who have healthy ears and who are not exposed to hazardous noise, should get a hearing test every three years.

How can I tell if a noise situation is too loud?

There are two rules: First, if you have to raise your voice to talk to someone who is an arm's length away, then the noise is likely to be hazardous. Second, if your ears are ringing or sounds seem dull or flat after leaving a noisy place, then you probably were exposed to hazardous noise.

Source: www.cdc.gov