Yearning to Breathe Free

Natural Strategies for Preventing and Treating COPD and Asthma

Most of us are lucky enough to take breathing for granted, but millions of people struggle to breathe on a regular basis due to chronic respiratory problems. COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder) is the medical term used to describe these disorders, which include chronic bronchitis, emphysema and severe bronchiectasis. Asthma is also considered a COPD, but is usually addressed separately. All of these diseases make it difficult to breathe and may involve blockage in the air passages, bronchial muscle spasms, inflammation of the mucus membranes, deterioration of the lung tissue and increased mucus production.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 18.9 million Americans suffer from asthma, and another 15 million suffer from COPD. Doctors typically treat these people with prescription anti-inflammatories, bronchial dilators, antihistamines, expectorants and decongestants. They may also use antibiotics, respiratory therapy and sometimes, even surgery. These medical treatments may relieve symptoms and even save lives, but they do not actually cure these diseases. In fact, many medical practitioners consider these diseases to be incurable.

Understanding Asthma

Asthma is characterized by wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath and tightness in the chest. These symptoms occur because airways become constricted, making it difficult to breathe. Two factors are involved. The first is inflammation. Various irritants, such as air pollutants, pet and animal dander, dust mites, mold, infections, pollen or even foods, trigger inflammatory reactions in the air passages. This causes swelling of the airways, which inhibits breathing. Doctors typically treat this with oral or inhaled corticosteroid drugs, which reduce the inflammation.

The second factor in asthma is a constriction of the airways due to muscular contraction or stress. Epinephrine, which is released by the sympathetic nervous system, causes dilation of the air passages, while the parasympathetic nervous system causes air passages to constrict, reducing airflow. Modern medicine typically treats this by using inhalers, which contain epinephrine that causes immediate bronchial dilation.

Both of these approaches to asthma can be duplicated with natural remedies, but they are just Band-Aids; they don't heal the asthma. We'll discuss strategies that fix the root causes of the inflammation and vasoconstriction inside.

Understanding COPD

COPD is characterized by chronic cough (also known as smoker's cough), chronic phlegm production, shortness of breath while doing routine things, wheezing and an inability to breathe deeply. COPD has some similarities with asthma, but there are some additional issues. In COPD, the bronchial tubes also become inflamed and swollen, but there can be damage to the air sacs in the lungs that causes them to break down, resulting in less surface area for oxygen exchange. These tissues may also lose their elasticity. The cilia, which sweep mucus out of the lungs, may also become less effective, causing mucus to accumulate in the airways and further inhibiting breathing. These factors can make exhalation as well as inhalation difficult.

COPD, like asthma, may be treated with bronchial dilators and anti-inflammatories but may also involve oxygen therapy and even surgery. Again, we'll discuss how to work on the root causes of COPD and help the lungs to actually heal inside.

Turn the page to learn about the root causes of COPD and asthma...

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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A Concise Owner's Manual for Your Lungs

When you inhale, air enters your nose and/or mouth and travels down to the trachea and into the two bronchial passages in the lungs. The bronchial passages are like the trunks of an upside-down tree that divide into smaller and smaller tubes called bronchioles. These bronchioles end in tiny air sacks called alveoli. Each alveoli is surrounded by a blood capillary, allowing the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide to take place.

The lungs themselves are fairly passive. Their spongy texture allows them to expand and contract as the diaphragm and rib muscles alter the size of the chest cavity. The alveoli are elastic, like tiny air balloons. As the diaphragm contracts downward and the chest expands outward, they inflate. As the diaphragm and chest muscles relax, the alveoli contract, pushing air out of the lungs.

Since the air you breathe can contain dust, pollen, bacteria, viruses and other debris, the membranes lining the respiratory passages from the sinuses to the lungs secrete a thin, watery substance called mucus to coat and protect them. This mucus traps particles, and tiny hair-like projections called cilia sweep this mucus (and the debris it traps) away. Mucus in the sinus cavities is pushed to the back of the throat, while mucus in the lungs is swept to the trachea and into the esophagus.

Avoiding Respiratory Irritation

With this basic understanding, we're now ready to explore the underlying causes of asthma and COPD. It is well established that both conditions can be linked to triggers that irritate and inflame the lungs, such as:

- Tobacco smoke (primary and second-hand)
- Pollen
- Respiratory infections
- Cold, dry air or hot, humid air
- Chemical irritants (such as smoke, smog, paint fumes and artificial fragrances)
- Pet and animal dander
- Mold, fungus and dust mites

Most cases of emphysema are caused by cigarette smoking while most of the remaining cases are caused by exposure to other irritants. So, one of the first things needed to both prevent and treat COPD is to minimize exposure to these irritants. If you smoke, quit. If you work around chemicals like solvents or paint be sure to wear appropriate protective equipment. Also use non-toxic household cleaning products and personal care products.

People living in cities with high levels of air pollution are at a greater risk for developing asthma and other lung problems. If you live in an area with high levels of air pollution and can't move, consider getting some type of air filtration system for your home. You may also wish to consider the Boomerang Air and Surface Sanitizer (see sidebar). This system helps reduce particulate matter in the air and is helpful for eliminating mold, bacteria, viruses and other airborne contaminants.

Supporting Respiratory Detoxification

When most people have excessive mucus drainage (sneezing, coughing and post-nasal drip) they want to do something to make it stop. So, they take antihistamines, cough suppressants and other remedies to dry up or arrest this drainage. However, this flushing of irritants with mucus is how the respiratory system cleanses itself of irritants. When this process is interfered with, irritants remain in contact with lung tissue for longer periods of time, which increases lung irritation, creating chronic inflammation and eventually tissue damage.

So, instead of fighting this process, it's best to support it. Avoid using antihistamines and cough suppressants when congested. Instead, drink plenty of fluids to keep the mucus thin (mucus is mostly water). Take decongestant herbs to loosen mucus and expectorant herbs to help the body expel the mucus from the body (some expectorants and decongestants are listed on page four).

Dehydration aggravates respiratory problems, so if you have asthma or COPD avoid beverages that increase water loss such as coffee, tea, caffeinated sodas and alcohol. Drink one-half ounce of pure water per pound of body weight daily.

The Respiratory-Gut Connection

It is well documented that children who are raised in sterile, city environments tend to have more problems with allergies and asthma than children who are raised around animals and dirt. This may have to do with the importance of gut microflora to respiratory health. When the gastrointestinal tract is irritated and inflamed the sensitivity of the respiratory membranes may increase, causing increased lung and sinus problems. Therefore, cleansing and healing the gastrointestinal tract and establishing a healthy intestinal microflora is essential to a healthy respiratory system.

Boomerang Air and Surface Sanitizer

This appliance doesn't filter the air. Instead, it kills airborne microbes, neutralizes pollen and causes particulates in the air to settle out, making the air you breathe cleaner. It also helps neutralize indoor odors.

The Boomerang Air and Surface Sanitizer utilizes a patent-pending Silver+ Photo Catalytic Oxidation or PCO cell. The cell contains nano-sized metals, silver, nickel, rhodium, copper and titanium, that react with photons from ultraviolet (UV) light to create millions of redundant oxidizers, including super oxide ions, hydroxyl ions, hydro peroxide ions and ozonide ions. All of these kill or neutralize airborne organisms and knock particulate matter out of the air.

The Boomerang unit sanitizes 2,000 square feet of open living space and requires no cleaning or filter replacement. There's no maintenance for the first three years of operation, either. If you have asthma or another COPD, the Boomerang may be helpful in protecting your lungs from infection and irritants.

Natural Remedies to Help You Breathe Freely

There are many natural remedies that can help a person with COPD or asthma to breathe freely. We'll first look at natural alternatives to medical treatments for symptomatic relief. Then we'll discuss remedies that can work on the root causes for a more permanent solution.

Reducing Inflammation

Corticosteroids are frequently used to treat COPD and asthma. These drugs are used to reduce inflammation and mimic the action of a hormone called cortisol which is produced by the adrenal glands. Corticosteroids are administered both orally and via inhalation and rapidly reduce inflammation and ease breathing. However, they also have numerous side effects including elevated blood pressure, weight gain, elevated blood sugar levels, suppression of the immune system and gastrointestinal upset.

Fortunately, there are natural ways to reduce inflammation. First, since inflammation is the body's natural response to irritation, avoid substances that irritate the mucus membranes. This includes not only the inhaled irritants listed previously, but irritants that are ingested.

Many people with chronic respiratory diseases find improvement when they eliminate dietary allergens such as grains (especially the gluten-bearing grains like wheat, rye and barley), dairy products, food additives, preservatives and refined sugars. It is also important to avoid any foods that tend to produce intestinal gas, bloating, burping or belching as these are feeding small intestinal bacteria and causing gastrointestinal (GI) tract upset.

Strengthening the adrenals can help the adrenal glands to produce natural cortisol to help regulate inflammation. Licorice root has a cortisol-sparing action and helps reduce chronic inflammation. It also helps reduce cravings for sugar. It is a good choice for asthmatic children, but may be problematic for adults with COPD if they have high blood pressure.

Adrenal Support will strengthen the adrenal glands and can be very helpful for adults with COPD. **Thai-Go** or **IF Relief** may also be helpful.

Dilating the Bronchials

Emergency inhalers deliver a dose of epinephrine to the bronchial passages, which causes them to dilate allowing more air to enter the lungs. This can be life-saving for a person in the middle of an asthma attack, but these drugs also have side-effects when used long term. Epinephrine tends to raise heart rate and blood pressure and increases feelings of stress and anxiety.

An herbal alternative to this is **lobelia**. Lobelia contains an alkaloid called lobeline. Lobeline dilates the bronchials, but lowers blood pressure and heart rate, reducing stress and anxiety. Taking a small amount of lobelia (20-30 drops) several times a day can help keep air passages open. It can also be used in an emergency to stop an asthma attack. Take 20-30 drops every 2-3 minutes with water until the attack subsides. Large doses of lobelia can cause nausea and induce vomiting, but this rarely happens when it is taken in this manner.

Balancing Immune Reactions

As mentioned on the previous page, there is a big connection between the health of the gastrointestinal tract and the respiratory tract. Most people with chronic respiratory problems have digestive problems such as a hiatal hernia, leaky gut and/or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), so it may be helpful to work on improving the health of the GI tract.

Most asthmatics and COPD sufferers have a hiatal hernia, a condition where the stomach slides upward into the opening in the diaphragm for the esophagus. This creates a mechanical obstruction that inhibits deep breathing from the diaphragm. See *Additional Help and Information* for references on how to work with this problem.

It is also common for people with chronic respiratory problems to have poor digestion, especially of protein. Consider using **Food Enzymes** or **PDA** (a hydrochloric acid supplement) to improve digestion. This also helps to control bacteria in the small intestines and ease gas and bloating. A colon cleanse using either **CleanStart** or the **Tiao He Cleanse** may also be helpful. This can be followed by long term use of **Gentle Move**, a mild laxative formula that tones intestinal membranes and helps the respiratory system.

As discussed earlier, healthy intestinal flora help modulate immune responses and can be very helpful for easing allergies, asthma and COPD. **Probiotic Eleven** contains 11 strains of friendly bacteria, which can help to reestablish a healthy intestinal flora. It will also be helpful to eat naturally cultured vegetables, such as raw sauerkraut or kimchi.

Two herbs that help to modulate immune reactions and may be helpful for COPD and asthma are **cordyceps** and **astragalus**. Both of these herbs are very healing to the lung tissue, too.

Healing Lung Tissue

In COPD lung tissue may be severely damaged. The damaged tissue means there is less surface area for oxygen exchange, making breathing difficult. The lung tissue may also have lost elasticity and mucus may accumulate in the lung tissue further inhibiting airflow. Drugs can't heal this tissue damage, but good nutrition and herbal remedies are helpful.

Continued on page 4

Additional Help and Information

For more information on natural approaches to COPD and asthma, contact the person who gave this newsletter to you or seek professional help. You can also consult the following sources:

The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products by Tree of Light

Natural Therapies for Emphysema and COPD by Robert J. Green, ND

Breathe Free by Daniel Gagnon and Amadea Morningstar

Hiatal Hernia Resources: modernherbalmedicine.com/articles/hiatal-hernia-hidden-cause-of-chronic-illness-2.html, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrdNfaanpIs and www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX0zKB2_-UM

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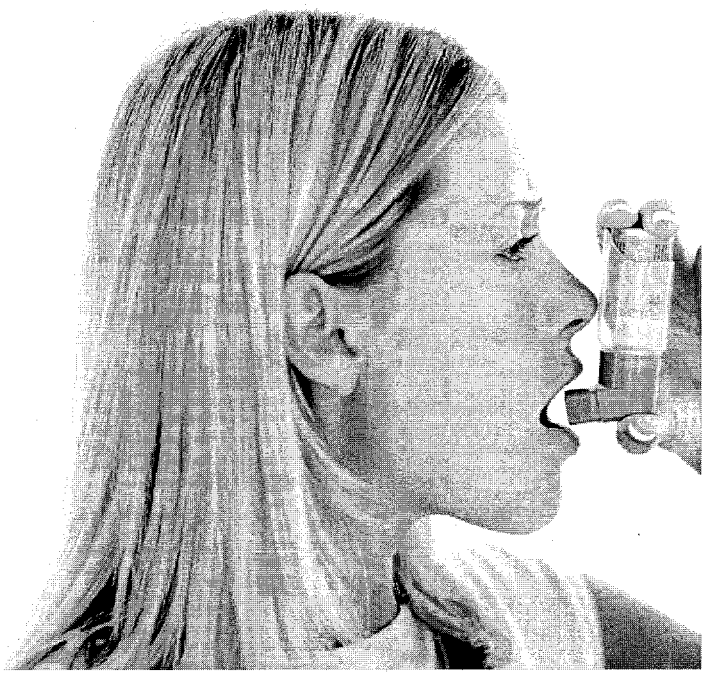

COPD and Asthma

Millions of people struggle to breathe because of chronic respiratory illness. Discover how diet, herbs and other natural methods can help people with COPD and asthma to breathe freely again.

Continued from Page Three

Start by eating a diet consisting primarily of fresh fruits and vegetables. Eat good quality proteins such as 100% grass-fed beef, lamb or buffalo, organic chicken, pasture-raised eggs, deep ocean fish, wild-caught salmon or wild game. Also use healthy fats such as organic butter, coconut oil, olive oil, avocados and nuts.

There are also herbs that can help, such as **mullein**, **marshmallow** and **horsetail.** Mullein is a gentle remedy that helps hydrate and heal lung tissue. Take 6-8 capsules daily for 6-12 months. Where lungs have lost elasticity or blood is being coughed from the lungs, horsetail can be helpful. It helps to restore elasticity to tissues and tones them up to stop bleeding. In this case take 2-4 capsules for 3-6 months, as this is also a slow-acting nutritive remedy.

An excellent formula for COPD is Chinese **Lung Support.** This blend is designed for shortness of breath, chronic dry cough, wheezing and other symptoms associated with COPD. It helps to heal lung tissue, prevents infection and improves pulmonary function. It is also useful for people who live in climates where the air is very dry, as it helps to hydrate the lungs.

In cases of asthma, consider the Chinese formula **Breathe Activator.** This formula helps to "ventilate the lungs," by expelling mucus, dilating the bronchials and reducing respiratory inflammation. This may be even more effective if you take 10-15 drops of **Lobelia Essence** with each 2 capsules of Breathe Activator.

Where the lungs are congested with mucus, consider **AL-J.** This is a wonderful decongestant and expectorant. It thins and loosens mucus and helps the body expel it. This can help to clear the lungs and further aid healing. Where mucus is thick and trapped, try taking **yerba santa**, grindelia (gumweed) and/or plantain with the AL-J. For combating respiratory infections combine AL-J with **High Potency Garlic** or **Silver Shield.**