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**TIPS FOR SLEEPING BETTER IF YOU HAVE ALLERGIES OR ASTHMA**

- \* Approximately 9 of every 10 asthma patients sometimes have disturbed sleep but most physicians agree: neither asthma patients nor their caregivers have to suffer from disturbed sleep.
- \* The major reason an asthma patient might have a poor night's sleep is **uncontrolled or poorly controlled asthma**. Many asthma flare-ups or symptoms happen at night, robbing patients of the rest they need to withstand and recuperate from these same flare-ups. **Asthma symptoms** like wheezing & coughing disturb sleep and are usually **at their worst at 4 am** and are referred to as the "morning dip."
- \* Many asthma patients also suffer from Acid Reflex or **GERD** (gastroesophageal reflux disorder) and this can be related to nighttime asthma flare-ups. GERD happens when the valve separating the esophagus from the stomach malfunctions and allows stomach content (acid and digestive enzymes) to leave the stomach and enter the esophagus. (Think of a door that won't shut properly). When this happens, the lining of the esophagus gets damaged causing heartburn, chest pains and belching. Symptoms are often worse at night because we sleep in a reclining position and the valve opens more easily.
- \* The vagus nerve that controls this valve action also affects actions in airway passages, so GERD can provoke asthma symptoms - coughing, wheezing, hoarseness or even stomach acids spilling into the lungs. Many asthma medications relax this vagus nerve quieting the cough and wheeze of asthma but because these meds relax the valve, they worsen GERD by opening the valve which can stimulate more asthma symptoms, a vicious cycle.
- \* For 80% of asthmatics, **emotions or stress can cause an asthma attack**; racing thoughts & stress don't allow a person to fall asleep or get back to sleep once awake, again creating a vicious cycle of symptoms for asthmatics.
- \* For some people, milk at bedtime encourages relaxation or settles a nervous stomach but because of the relationship of allergies and asthma, **milk at bedtime may have a negative effect on some allergic asthma patients**.
- \* There are **steps to help asthma patients get a good night's sleep**: 1) *Follow your medication treatment plan* by using anti-inflammatory control medications, typically using an inhaled corticosteroid and a long acting beta-agonist 2) *The time medication is used is critical*: Take the evening bronchodilator just before sleep, which minimizes the "morning dip" 3) *Have a comfortable and healthy bed*: Buy the best & most comfortable mattress you can afford; if you have dust mite allergies, eliminate dust mites issues by using bedding encasements; keep bedding free of other allergens like feather, down or animal dander if these are your allergens 4) *The bedroom should be a quiet, clean, appropriately dark and environmentally comfortable sanctuary*. Don't watch TV in bed and keep the computer out of the bedroom. 5) *Use a Peak Flow Meter* to ensure better asthma control. Peak Flow Meters accurately evaluate the level of airway narrowing even before symptoms begin to show or a flare-up starts. **Using a PFM** allows adjustments in asthma medications **before symptoms begin**, meaning better disease control and **better disease control means better sleep**. 6) *Control* other health issues that affect sleep quality such as nasal drainage, sleep apnea, intestinal problems, chronic pain and stress 7) If the patient is an adult and smokes, **stop smoking** & limit caffeine and alcohol intake late at night 8) Exercise is a good way to improve sleep quality but timing is important. Don't exercise before bedtime and if you have EIA (Exercise Induced Asthma) ask a physician about using a reliever inhaler prior to exercise 9) Drink less fluids after 6 pm and do relaxing things before bedtime like bathing, grooming, reading. Don't watch action movies, TV news, start a stressful project or play computer games before bed 10) Go to sleep and get up at the same hours every day, setting a pattern that works for you, and above all, keep animals out of the bedroom.

**SLEEPING BETTER IF YOU'RE A CAREGIVER OR PARENT OF A CHILD WITH ASTHMA OR ALLERGIES**

- \* Nighttime asthma symptoms keep **parents & caregivers** awake, too. **To sleep better, caregivers** should: 1) Educate themselves about the disease. Be in control through knowledge 2) Learn when to ask for professional help for their children's symptoms 3) Maintain the best asthma control plan for the patient: regularly use a PFM, use control meds, practice environmental controls, avoid triggers and make regular doctor visits 4) Recognize the stresses of being the caregiver for an asthma patient; every week, set time to do something fun for yourself, whatever relaxes you 5) Make the adult bedroom a private sanctuary – buy a good bed, maintain proper darkness and keep pets out of the bedroom 6) Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evenings & **stop smoking. Nicotine is a stimulant.** 7) Use your own medications as needed 8) Have someone to talk with regularly to share thoughts & fears either about your own problems or your children's disease 9) Avoid TV news or violent movies before bedtime and exercise either in the morning or daytime rather than right before bedtime 10) See your doctor for professional help if insomnia lasts more than a week.
- For more information on asthma and allergies, contact AAFA-TX.

**Upcoming Free AAFA-TX Programs:** 1) **Sat. July 14, 9-1 pm** – "Shooting for Health" for kids 10-17 yrs., a morning of health awareness and basketball fun sponsored by the United Basketball League and the San Antonio Soul. Antiock Community Sports Complex San Antonio. For more information, contact Mac Claire, 210-462-7854 2) **Wed. Aug. 1**, Clear Channel Employees Health Fair" San Antonio 3) **Tues. Aug. 14, 8 am-11 am** " **Asthma Management & Education**" a CEU program for nurses worth 3 CEU, Houston. Pre-register online with the Houston ISD. **Contact AAFA-TX for more info.**

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