

Dear Readers: This is the free newsletter of the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, Texas Chapter. If you do not wish to receive other newsletters from AAFA-TX, please request we remove your address. To subscribe, email your request to info@aafatexas.org. Addresses are never shared. Thank you. Please add new sender's email (joanhart@aafatexas.org) to your address book to ensure delivery. Welcome SAFER Houston, a food allergy, asthma and allergy support group affiliate of AAFA-TX.

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A LIFESTYLE APPROACH TO ASTHMA CONTROL

* 1) Do you, or your child, sleep through the night without symptoms of cough or wheezing? 2) Are you, or your child, doing well at your job or in school, attending and performing to your peak? 3) Can you, or your child, play, exercise and participate in sports and other fun activities without asthma symptoms slowing you down? If so, you're probably in control of your asthma. Being **IN CONTROL means asthma or allergies aren't interfering with your quality of life. But how do you get control?**

* Naturally, to get control of asthma a patient needs to follow their medication plan, (be in compliance), yet many who do follow their plans still have frequent asthma symptoms and flares; they might say their quality of life isn't the best. So taking medications isn't always the only answer to control. Perhaps a more complete route to control and a better quality of life in general is to adopt a **"lifestyle" approach to controlling asthma symptoms**. It's not as hard as it sounds.

* First, get a **proper diagnosis and an appropriate medication plan** suitable for the severity of your asthma, then, follow that plan. Use a controller medication if it's needed and rescue medications as directed and needed. Use spacers on your inhalers and take your Peak Flow readings. Keep 6 month follow-up appointments to **assess your asthma control** and learn if you should "step-up" (increase or change) medications or "step-down" (decrease or change) medications. The ultimate goal is to reduce dependency on drugs and yet not have any asthma symptoms.

* Almost 70% of asthmatics have asthma **symptoms triggered by allergies**. AAFA-TX suggests you **learn what triggers your asthma symptoms** and then **eliminate those allergens** or irritants from your environment. Most patients have more than one allergen or irritant that triggers asthma symptoms. If dust mites are one of your allergens, eliminate "dust" catching drapes and furniture from your home, encase your mattresses, use a hepa-filter vacuum frequently and the best AC filter you can afford. If mold is an allergen, be certain to ventilate bathrooms and kitchens to remove humidity, repair any leaking pipes or faucets which can contribute to mold, kill any existing mold with a 1 part bleach to 9 part water solution (test fabrics for colorfastness first). If your asthma symptoms are triggered by chemical irritants, don't use air fresheners, room sprays, scented candles or household cleaning products that can irritate your lungs. Store garden chemicals away from the house, not in the garage; substitute environmentally friendly natural cleaning products for chemical based products. If allergic to dander, don't adopt a warm-blooded animal and if you have one, keep it out of the bedrooms. Ask AAFA-TX for easy environmental control measures to help eliminate your allergens.

* More than 60% of Texan children and adults are obese. **Obesity** has a bad impact on respiratory disease. Asthma symptoms are worse, more frequent and more difficult to bring into control if a patient is obese or greatly overweight. Decide that you really are in control. Reduce your calorie count by eating smarter and eating smaller portions. To help loose weight and improve over-all health, move your body! Don't be a couch or computer potato. Walk, dance, do housework, gardening, join a gym. Just become active. For many, asthma symptoms are triggered by exercise but that doesn't mean someone with asthma should forgo fun and exercise. There are many **activities and sports suitable for someone with asthma**, those which require "bursts" of energy instead of forcing the lungs to work hard for a long or continual period of time. Sports like football, golf, baseball, gymnastics, volleyball, swimming, climbing, martial arts, walking and doubles tennis are all perfect activities for someone with asthma plus they're fun and burn calories, too! Ask AAFA-TX for more information about **Exercise Induced Asthma**.

* **Maintain a strong immune system by adopting healthier eating habits** which can help improve resistance to respiratory infections that might trigger asthma symptoms – and help reduce obesity, too. Ask AAFA-TX for more information about eating healthier to become healthier.

* If you smoke, stop. If there are smokers in your household, help them stop smoking. **Smoke**, whether generated from cigarettes, pipes, cigars, barbecue grills or a fireplace is a **major trigger for asthma symptoms**. Eliminating smoking from your environment will not only improve your asthma symptoms but it will help our total air quality.

* Have fun to **reduce stress**. For some, asthma symptoms are triggered by emotions or stress. Adopt a hobby, learn to play an instrument, keep strong ties with friends and family in order to help reduce stress. Learn and practice relaxation breathing and meditation techniques to control your stress and prevent asthma symptoms.

* Get **adequate sleep** to keep your body and mind strong. Adults need at least 7-8 hours of sleep and children 10-11 to remain balanced and healthy. Ask AAFA-TX for hints on how to sleep better which helps to control asthma symptoms.

* Adopting a lifestyle approach to controlling asthma will help your medications work more effectively because you're controlling all the triggers for your asthma symptoms. You will be in control of your asthma and your quality of life will improve. Always **speak to your healthcare provider** before making any lifestyle changes. For more information, contact info@aafatexas.org You CAN control asthma & allergies!

Upcoming AAFA-TX free programs: 1) August 5, 7-9 pm SAFER Houston (Food Allergy Support Group) meeting, topic: "Back to School" Montgomery County south Regional Library, 2101 Lake Robbins Dr. The Woodlands 77380. For more information contact dorin@saferhouston.com

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