

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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ASTHMA & ALLERGY NEWS

* Most of us are aware of the impact asthma has on the quality of life for children, but the **impact of childhood allergies** is just as disturbing. According to a survey conducted by Pediatric Allergies in America, **parents responded** that 1) allergies interfere with their child's sleep 2) allergy symptoms limited their child's activities 3) allergy symptoms interfered with their child's educational performance and 4) 27% polled said the most bothersome symptom was a stuffed nose but 46% said their child had more serious symptoms like headache, ear or facial pain. What does this survey prove? **We're not treating children's allergies as well as we should be.**

* Another study is no surprise: **the more environmental allergens found inside a home, the more asthma symptoms patients** living in that home **have**. A study conducted through the National Institute of Environmental Health definitely linked a higher incidence of indoor allergens including pet dander, dust mites, roaches and mold to more asthma symptoms. In the homes studied, those asthmatic children who had fewer symptoms lived in homes that were cleaned more frequently and more thoroughly, eliminating allergens. What does this study prove? **We need to adopt better cleaning habits** and clean more frequently **to eliminate indoor allergens** since most of us spend the majority of our time indoors where these triggers can cause asthma flares.

* According to a bulletin published by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, "it's **safer for pregnant women with asthma to be treated with asthma medications** than it is for them to **have asthma symptoms** and exacerbations during pregnancy." **Pregnant asthmatic women** should continue with the lowest possible medication doses that will control their asthma and monitor the pregnancy for any signs the fetus isn't growing at a normal rate or if there are any signs of an early delivery. The **goal of controlling asthma in pregnancy is to prevent asthma flares** so the fetus has enough oxygen to grow and develop normally. If you're pregnant and have asthma, work closely with both your obstetrician and your asthma healthcare provider to monitor both your pregnancy and your asthma.

* **Allergy testing along with a detailed medical history is vital in controlling allergies** because if you know what substances you're allergic to, you can do a better job in eliminating those allergens from your environment and preventing allergy symptoms. Allergy tests are easier, more convenient and more accurate than ever before and are part of the evidence-based medical guidelines to control allergies. Because **almost 70% of asthmatics have allergic asthma**, it's vital to **know your allergens so they can be avoided and asthma symptoms reduced**, according to findings of joint guidelines published in the Annuals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.

* New research indicates that **children, age birth to three years, who wheeze due to a rhinovirus illnesses** (the rhinovirus is the most common cause of colds in both adults and children) are a **good predictor** that the **child may develop asthma** by the time they're age six. What does this mean to you? Take care to **wash hands thoroughly and frequently to prevent the spread of colds** to your infants and teach young children to wash hands properly and often, too. **Washing hands is still the most effective means to both stop the spread of and to prevent colds.**

* Do you or your children have **food allergies**? New labeling laws contain more ingredient information and warnings for possible cross contamination, making more consumers satisfied and confident they could protect themselves. The FDA recently heard testimony whether the labeling rules were protective enough. A study by the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York discovered that **even though labels are clearly marked, food allergic consumers are ignoring them**. If you have food allergies the *best method to prevent symptoms and a possible anaphylactic reaction is to avoid your allergens* and the best way to do that is to read the information provided on labels and learn the alternate names for the ingredients which contain your food allergen. Please do remember that **manufacturers often change their formulas** or processing plants so it's necessary to **check labels each time you shop**. Consumers need to take control and protect themselves.

* Many persons with **food allergies avoid eating in restaurants** because they can never be certain they won't be exposed to their allergens. This limiting of a normal activity means that the quality of life for those with food allergies is often reduced. If you take caution in your choice of restaurants, it **is possible to eat out safely if you have food allergies**. Many restaurants have **online information** on their websites for **food allergic individuals** and some even have toll free phone numbers. If you're allergic to shellfish or fish for example, you might want to check to see if the restaurant you want to visit offers fish on their menu before you get to the restaurant and find it's a specialty there. Type in the restaurant's name in your web browser and look for nutrition or allergen information on the website as well as the toll free numbers.

* For more information on allergies and asthma, contact info@aafatexas.org or check www.aafatexas.org

Upcoming AAFA-TX programs: 1) General information, eligibility qualifications and the application for the 2008-2009 academic year "**AAFA-TX Kareem Bacchus Memorial Scholarships**" is available online at www.aafatexas.org Deadlines for application is March 31, 2009. Successful candidates will be notified by June, 2009. 2) **March 11** "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers" Tarrant Cty. United Way, Wilbarger St., Patty Carlton, instructor. For more information, send your inquiries to info@aafatexas.org

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