

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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Scholarship donations have been received in memory of Tristan Phillip Sutton, age 10, of Houston. Thank you.

ASTHMA & ALLERGY BITS AND PIECES

* Recent studies confirm what we know: **home environmental conditions do affect asthma and allergies in children.**

Risks of having asthma and allergy symptoms increase when home remodeling projects such as installing new flooring, painting or buying new furniture occurs because the newer materials used in these products have higher chemical emissions or off-gases. Indoor pollutants play a very strong role in whether a child may have an asthma flare. **Exposure to tobacco smoke, mold, and chemical emissions from synthetic surface materials and furniture** really do increase respiratory illnesses in children. If you plan a remodeling project, it's better to use natural materials when possible (ceramic, stone, slate, etc rather than pressed woods or fiberboard), shop for paints which are rated "allergy-friendly" and look for hardwood flooring that's been pre-stained before installation, which cuts exposure to harmful chemical fumes.

* Between 2000 and 2005, a great percentage of adults hospitalized for a serious condition such as heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, depression, or other disorders were also discovered to have **asthma as a secondary but previously un-diagnosed disease**, an increase over earlier years of 113%. If you live in northeastern US, your chances of being hospitalized for asthma or asthma as a secondary disease, are 60% greater than for adults living in the west. Adults from disadvantaged communities were 63% more likely to be hospitalized for asthma or asthma as a secondary disease than adults living in wealthier communities. These statistics imply an unequal access to good healthcare within our healthcare system based on geography and finances.

* **If you have asthma, learn to listen to your body.** Early warning signs that your asthma may be getting worse include runny, stuffy nose, fatigue, chin or throat itches, headache, moodiness, cough when laughing or performing other physical activities, wheezing when active, waking at night or in early morning with a cough or wheeze, a faster breathing rate, irritability. If you have asthma and experience some of these symptoms or notice your asthmatic child has some or all of these signs, see your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Asthma **severity might change** at any time for every individual so it's important to see your healthcare provider when you notice these signs.

* Do you know the **difference between a side effect** to a medication and **drug hypersensitivity or drug allergy**? Every medication, whether prescription or OTC, has the potential to cause side effects or an unpleasant reaction in some people. There can also be unpleasant reactions when certain drugs interact with other medications you might be taking. (Remember, vitamins, herbal supplements, aspirin, Tylenol, etc. are also drugs and have a potential to interact). This type of reaction doesn't involve the immune system: in most cases the bad drug reaction stops if the medication is stopped. But, if you experience a **reaction that is caused because the immune system is attacking the substance, then you may have a drug allergy or hypersensitivity to that medication.**

* Most allergic drug reactions occur when the drug is sent directly to the bloodstream by intravenous injection and usually when the drug is injected in large doses or frequently. Some drugs, including antibiotics and penicillin, cause more frequent allergic reactions. The **signs of a drug allergy** (which usually occurs the second time your body is exposed to that particular drug if it's triggered by an immune system response) **include** rash or hives, wheezing, itching, breathing problems, swelling in the body and anaphylaxis. An anaphylactoid reaction (mimicking anaphylaxis) poses the same deadly threat as anaphylaxis triggered by foods, insect bites or latex allergies. **Anaphylactoid reactions** most commonly occur to injections of x-ray dye or to aspirin and they can occur on first exposure to the medication. These bad drug reactions can occur immediately or wait to happen until hours after the drug is taken and sometimes, in some cases, after the drug is stopped. If you have a drug allergy, usually just avoiding that drug will prevent future symptoms. If there is no alternative drug and the allergic drug is necessary for medical treatment, then **drug desensitization** might be started – a slow introduction of small amounts of the drug over a period of time, the same principal as immunotherapy. Anaphylaxis and anaphylactoid reactions are a life threatening reaction. If you show any signs of anaphylaxis seek emergency help immediately. For more information on asthma and allergies, check www.aafatexas.org or contact us at info@aafatexas.org

Upcoming AAFA-TX programs: **1) May 16**, "Applying NHLBI Guidelines to Diagnosing & Managing Asthma, 2009" a CME and ACPE accredited seminar worth 4.5 cat. 1 credits for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, pharmacy techs, nurses and respiratory therapists. LaQuinta Inn, Arlington. William Lumry, MD, Robert Rogers, MD, Eric Schmitt, MD, William A. Neaville, MD, instructors, Richard Herrscher, MD, moderator. Pre-registration required. For more information and to register, contact info@aafatexas.org Space is limited. **2) May 30**, "Asthma Management & Education" a CE program for nurses and respiratory therapists, Ft. Lauderdale, FL., Kathleen Conboy-Ellis, ARNP, PhD, AE-C, instructor. Pre-registration required. Contact AAFA-TX for info. **3) August 17** "Asthma Management & Education" a CE program for nurses and respiratory therapists, Ft. Worth, Pre-registration required. FWISD nurses are pre-registered. Space is limited. Contact AAFA-TX for info, info@aafatexas.org

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