

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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Congratulation to the recipients of the 2008-09 AAFA-TX Kareem Bacchus Memorial Scholarships: Austin Baty of Arlington, TX, Caitlyn Kubenka of Moulton, TX, and Krystal English of Richardson, TX. Read more about these outstanding young people who overcame their asthma www.aafatexas.org

NEWS YOU CAN USE

- * Having asthma is no excuse for not participating in sports or exercising. Select **sports that work well for asthmatics**, those that involve short bursts of energy at any one time – gymnastics, volleyball, softball, wrestling and especially swimming. Always speak to your healthcare provider before beginning a new activity and follow some simple rules for safe and fun participation: use your pre-exercise inhaled meds as prescribed; do warm-ups and cool downs; if it's cold outdoors, exercise inside or wear a mask or scarf over your nose and mouth; avoid exercising outdoors when pollen counts or ozone levels are high; don't exercise if you have a viral infection and exercise at a level that suits your individual ability. Play safe and be safe.
- * Scientists have learned it **may not be the feathers, down or kapok stuffing** in pillows, toys or cushions that **cause your allergic reactions**: it's the **dust mites and mold** that live in those stuffed animals and pillows that is the culprit for your allergic reactions. It doesn't matter what your pillows are stuffed with; if you live in a humid environment dust mites and mold can thrive and cause misery in any fabric. Rather than tossing the toys or pillows, wash them in hot (130°F) water and dry in a hot dryer to kill the dust mites and mold and relieve allergy symptoms. (Follow manufacturer's cleaning instructions on all products and test for color fastness). Not washable? Freezing works to kill dust mites too (but won't affect mold). Place the object in a plastic bag, seal and put it in the freezer for 24 hrs.
- * **Thunderstorms** create a double whammy for some people with allergy and allergic asthma. Before the storm hits, even while the sun is still shining, updraft **winds stir up both mold spores and tiny particles of pollen grains**. Mold spore counts can rise 100 times higher than normal before a storm so if mold is one of your allergens, you'll feel miserable while a storm is brewing. After the thunderstorm passes, don't run right outside; those strong storm winds caused **grass pollen grains** to release tiny smaller pollen grains (1000 times smaller than normal). These grass grains won't show up on a pollen count, but the winds carry these tiny particles just high enough for us to breathe them deeply into our lungs. The solution to avoid allergy misery is to learn your allergens and if mold and pollen are on your list, avoid being outdoors both before and immediately after thunderstorms.
- * One priority of our current administration is to improve not only the availability of healthcare but also the quality of healthcare for Americans. A 2006 study from the Commonwealth Fund graded the **quality of U.S. healthcare** as 66. That's equivalent to a "D", just passing. The U.S. is worse than other industrialized nations as well as marginally industrialized nations in infant mortality rates we have a lower overall life expectancy. It's not because we don't spend enough money – we **spend more than any other nation on health care** (\$6,000 per person in the U.S. compared with \$2,000 to \$3,000 spent per person in the U.K., Germany, Canada and France). What is **the problem?** The study suggests **fragmented healthcare** is a major part of the problem. Almost 33% of our adult population under age 65 (46 million) has no health insurance, and the healthcare provided for the other 66% isn't consistent. The U.S. spends 3 times more than France in administering health insurance and less than 20% of U.S. physicians use electronic medical records, the lowest rates of any industrialized nation. As any parent of a child with asthma knows, we're overdue in reforming our healthcare system. For more info on healthcare reform see <http://www.HealthReform.gov>
- * If you have a **food allergic** child or are food allergic, you know the demands made on normal routines. Grocery shopping becomes a lesson in reading product ingredients; normal social situations could become a land mine of danger. For whatever reason, the number of persons affected by food allergy, especially to peanuts, is rising. At this moment the only certain "treatment" is **avoidance** of your food allergen but new studies offer hope for those with **peanut allergy**. In the **challenge tests**, a small amount of peanut protein is ingested, and over time, the amount is increased. The hoped for result is **desensitization to the peanut allergen**. Extremely **dangerous**, this procedure should **never be attempted at home** but must always be done in a physician's office where immediate medical care is available in case of an adverse reaction. If you think peanut desensitization may provide some relief for your food allergies, speak to your specialist about the options available to you.
- * 2009 CDC statistics show about 23 million Americans, including 6.8 million children, have asthma. A recent informal response from Texas schools indicates approximately 25% of our kids have documented asthma. Between 2001 and 2005, the number of reported asthma related deaths in Texas was 1,272. In the US as a whole, 14 people die each day from asthma. We don't like to talk about it, but yes, **asthma does kill**. Untreated or under-treated or severe uncontrollable asthma can cause unnecessary death, no matter the age. If you have asthma, seek the right medical diagnosis, remain in compliance with your medication plans, learn all you can about the disease and eliminate the environmental triggers which can cause asthma symptoms. Your life is very important to us. For more information about asthma and allergies, contact info@aafatexas.org

Upcoming AAFA-TX programs: 1) **June 17**, "Tools to Manage Asthma & Allergies" a worksite wellness program, Citi Group, Irving, TX, Neil Singhania, MD, instructor. 2) **June 22-26**, SAFE day camp for food allergic kids 4-11 yrs, Plano, call 972-727-2204 for more info and to register.

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