

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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Ft. Worth, TX 76123 817-297-3132 888-933-2232 info@aafatexas.org www.aafatexas.org **HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ONE AND ALL!**

BLUEPRINT FOR A HEALTHIER WINTER

* After the heavy spring and fall pollen seasons we've experienced, most of us are looking forward to the first freeze as an end to the symptoms causing us misery. But are you off the hook just because winter is approaching? Not really. **Winter can actually cause more asthma and allergy misery than any other season.**

* **Colds and flu** are more prevalent in winter and contracting a **respiratory disease can trigger asthma symptoms.**

Asthma patients are at more risk for **complications** like bronchitis, pneumonia, sinus infections, hospitalizations and even death due to colds and flu. **Asthma is the #1 pre-existing medical condition leading to death from H1N1.** To **reduce your risk, 1)** get your seasonal flu shot and this year the H1N1 flu shot. (2 doses are recommended for infants and children under age 10.). **2) Use your asthma meds** as directed. **3) Monitor lung function** with your peak flow. **4) Make hand washing** your priority to help reduce your risk of spreading or contacting these viruses. The rule: wash often and thoroughly with regular soap and water (temperature doesn't matter) but especially when coming home from shopping, school, work or play. Antibacterial soaps are fine for occasional use but cause bacterial resistance. Colds and flu are caused by viruses so antibacterial washes do little to protect you. **5) When coughing or sneezing** teach yourself to do so in the **crook of your elbow**, not in your hands. If you do get a cold antibiotics won't help. Stay home, rest, drink lots of liquids, eat what appeals to you, especially chicken soup and treat the symptoms as prescribed by your healthcare provider. If you have asthma and get the flu, **6) have a medical action plan** in place with your healthcare provider. Get help immediately and follow pre-arranged directions.

* True, a **freeze does stop outdoor pollen and kill mold allergens**, but spending so much time indoors in winter also increases your chance of reacting to **indoor environmental allergens** like pet dander, dust mites and cockroach droppings. Even cold-blooded animals like lizards or snakes can cause allergic reactions for some due to the protein in their urine or feces. These allergens are all more prevalent in winter due to lack of ventilation and our circulating heating systems. You can **prevent allergy symptoms** by **allergy-proofing your house** now at the beginning of our winter hibernation. Are you buying a **live Christmas tree or wreath**? Most are cut in October and stored; **mold** can form on the trunks and branches leaving you miserable. To help reduce the mold risk, open, shake and dry out the live greens for a couple weeks in the garage. **Change your furnace filters** at least monthly to help prevent circulating allergens. If your **pets** are inside, bathe them more frequently and try to keep them off the furniture and definitely out of the bedroom. If you have terrariums with lizards, snakes or other pets, clean the cages every week, throwing out the used bedding materials each time. **Vacuum** with a hepa filter appliance at least once a week to control dust mites. Dump the feather duster and try **damp dusting** instead (depending on the surface to be cleaned). Just lightly dampen a clean soft cloth or sponge with water, squeeze dry, and catch the dust particles rather than lofting them into the air. To **prevent moisture build-up** which can lead to mold, caulk and seal the doors and windows, which will also save money on heating bills. Get a supply of inexpensive clear shower liners and either wash them or toss them monthly. Invest in a squeegee and make a habit of wiping down your shower stall after each use. Use exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens to rid the house of moisture and help prevent mold. Seal openings around drain pipes and keep drains closed when not in use to prevent cockroaches from entering your home. The allergen is in the urine so don't forget to thoroughly wash roach "trails" as well as set traps.

* 70% of asthmatics have **allergic asthma**: their symptoms are caused by allergy. Some asthmatics have asthma triggered by exercise, and most asthmatics will **sometimes have asthma symptoms triggered by cold air or exertion** often associated with exercise. **Winter sports** like hockey, skiing, ice skating, tobogganing, sledding and even shoveling snow or running outdoors can cause asthma symptoms due to this double whammy of exertion in cold air. Covering your mouth with a scarf to warm the air when exercising or doing outdoor cold-weather chores helps protect the lungs. **EIA can be controlled.** In most cases, it may require using your albuterol (as directed) before exercise. In addition, it is helpful to warm up before strenuous activity and don't forget a cool-down period, too. Warming up with light exercise causes the body to produce chemicals that protect us from bronchospasm. You can feel well in winter even if you have asthma or allergies. For more information, refer to www.aafatexas.org or email us at info@aafatexas.org

With Gratitude and Thanks! The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Texas provides free programs and services. We can because of the generous support from corporate education grants from Genentech, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Merck Pharmaceuticals and AstraZeneca; foundation grants including William & Catherine Bryce Memorial Fund, The Adeline & George McQueen Foundation, The Leo Potishman Foundation, The Windham-Bartlett Foundation, The Lumry Family Foundation, Toby Starr Trust, The Prairieland Foundation; EPA program stipends; community-sponsored fundraisers in our name; professional memberships; Tributes and Memorials to loved ones; individual, civic and corporate donations such as that from Colonial Country Club. 93 cents of every dollar donated supports our free programs and services. To all these supporters we offer our gratitude and thanks! **We need your support this year more than ever.** You can help AAFA-TX continue to provide services and programs free to the community. We are a 501 c 3 organization: contributions and grants may be tax deductible

Upcoming AAFA-TX programs: **1)** Applications for the AAFA-TX Kareem Bacchus Scholarships, 2009-2010 are now available at www.aafatexas.org. Completed applications MUST be returned to AAFA-TX before March 15, 2010. **2) Jan. 15, 2010** "Asthma Management & Education" a continuing education program for nurses, respiratory therapists and educators worth 3 CEU. Little Rock, AK. Instructor Jeanette Arnold, MSN, CFNP, AE-C **3) Jan. 18, 2010** "Asthma Management & Education" a continuing education program for nurses, respiratory therapists and educators worth 3 CEU. Amarillo, TX. Instructor: Don Cui, PA-C, AE-C. Pre-registration required. Questions? Contact info@aafatexas.org

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