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ASTHMA & ALLERGY NEWS YOU CAN USE

* Studies now prove that **asthma severity** and poorly controlled asthma is **linked to obesity**. Over 2,000 adult asthma patients studied during a 3 yr. period demonstrated that gaining five or more pounds a year results in more poorly controlled asthma, the need to use inhaled steroids more frequently and a poor quality of life in general. If you have asthma, bringing your weight into control will help you control your asthma, too.

* A severe allergy reaction can lead to **anaphylaxis** even for patients undergoing allergen immunotherapy. Anaphylaxis can take two forms: uniphasic or biphasic. Uniphasic means that there is one single life-threatening reaction that needs immediate treatment with epinephrine and ER follow-up. Biphasic means that there may be two reactions in the same allergen exposure incident. This second reaction may occur minutes or hours after the first reaction. Researchers concluded in most cases, the faster symptoms occurred after exposure to the allergen in the first place, the more likely there will be a second or biphasic reaction, usually within 30 minutes. But in all those studied, these second reactions were fairly mild and non-life threatening and didn't require another epinephrine injection but to be safe, if you have life-threatening allergies, you should have two epinephrine injectors available. All specialists agree **immunotherapy** treatments should **always be conducted in the medical office setting** in case there are any severe reactions during this process that might lead to an anaphylactic reaction.

* Mom, try to control the stress in your life because **mothers who are chronically stressed** when their children are young **have children who have a higher asthma rate**, according to a study released by the American Thoracic Society. No one can definitely say what causes children to develop asthma. Most scientists believe it is partly genetic (parents have a history of asthma) and partly environmental. And, no one can say specifically what environmental factors pose the biggest risks. Study has shown that when mothers are chronically distressed (this includes depression as well as anxiety) during the first five years of their child's life there is a much higher chance that the child will have asthma by the time they get to kindergarten. Why? Some researchers think it's because stressed mothers have a tendency to smoke more and also are less likely to breast-feed or pay as much attention to their babies. Economic status plays a role, too. Kids from families in higher income brackets who have mothers that were always stressed were more susceptible to asthma than kids with stressed moms of lower income levels.

* Exercise programs do more than help us lose weight and improve general health. Scientists believe that **certain types of exercise can also improve lung function**. Aerobics, walking, running, cycling and swimming are good exercises to improve lung function. Another exercise may also be beneficial. **Pilates**, named after the man who developed these core-building exercises in the late 1920's, are usually a series of floor or mat exercises using very little equipment. These regulated movements work on pelvic, stomach and spine muscles to improve flexibility, coordination, muscle strength, joint range of motion and posture. There are 3 intensity levels to Pilates, all of which **help improve breathing** which can also help improve asthma symptoms. Don't assume because Pilates aren't aerobic that your heart, sweat rate, muscle fatigue and breathing rates don't increase while doing Pilates. They do increase, which is the reason you should discuss plans to start Pilates with your healthcare provider if you have allergy or asthma, especially if you have exercise-induced asthma. It is important to select the right level of Pilates for you and to work with an experienced Pilate instructor (one who has at least 3 yrs. of training in this method). Sessions should be at least 30 minutes in length to be beneficial with normal warm-up and cool-down work, too. Your healthcare provider may suggest using your albuterol inhaler before the class. Pilates may be very beneficial but, for asthmatics, they don't replace aerobic or cardio workouts which have more improved lung-function benefits. Pilates should be used in addition to aerobic exercise. As always, speak to your healthcare provider before starting or changing your exercise program.

* We're learning how important adequate supplies of vitamin D are for optimal health. We know it's necessary for healthy bones but it also plays a role in preventing depression, autoimmune disorders and now, a new study by the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. shows there is a significantly **higher rate of asthma** in African-American children who also test high for **Vitamin D deficiency**. Vitamin D deficiency has a **serious effect on lung health**. The best source of vitamin D is natural sunlight but eating foods high in Vitamin D like oily fish or white mushrooms or foods fortified with vitamin D such as various milks, cereal products, yogurt and soy products, will provide the vitamin D we need to help keep our lungs healthy. For more information on allergy and asthma, email info@aafatexas.org or see www.aafatexas.org

Upcoming AAFA-TX programs: 1) **May 12** "Tools To Manage Your Asthma & Allergies" Citi Group, Irving, TX, Andrew D. Beaty, MD, instructor 2) **May 15** "Manage Adolescent and Adult Asthma with a Team Approach: Apply NHLBI Guideline to Your Practice" a CME symposium worth 4.5 category 1 credits (4.5 AOA category 1-B credits and 4.5 ACPE contact hours) for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, nurses and respiratory therapists. Arlington, TX. To register see <http://aafatexas.org/registration.htm> 3) **June 14** "Asthma Management & Education" a continuing education program for nurses, respiratory therapists and educators worth 3 CEU. Dallas. Pre-registration required with Dallas ISD. Questions? Visit www.aafatexas.org for complete symposium details or contact info@aafatexas.org

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