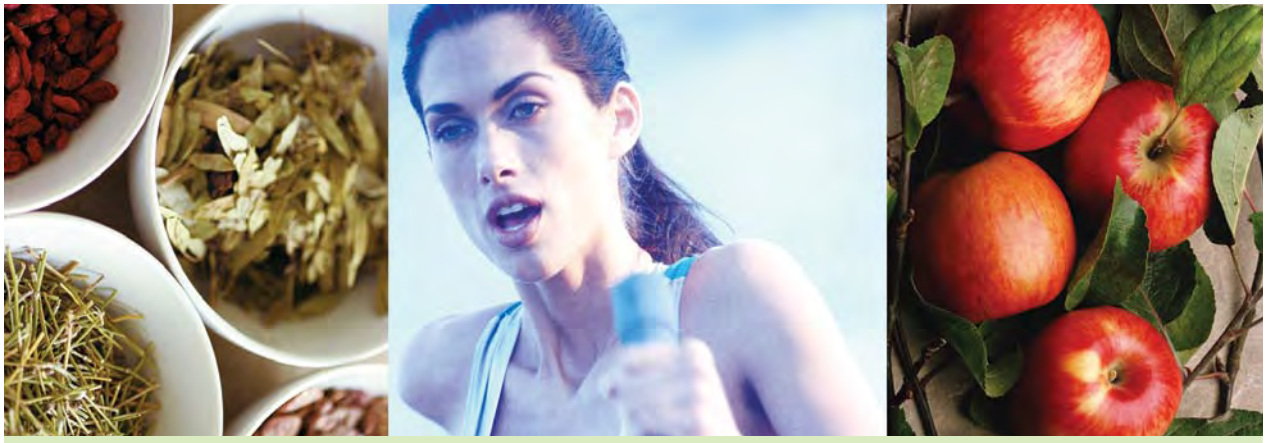

# Alert: Study Shows Asthma Sufferers Face New Risks

## Research reveals startling new dangers for those with poor breathing, while natural methods of lung fortification emerge.

by Dr. Pamela Maloney, Ph.D.
*Medical Advisor*

A recent Australian study of 7,619 participants reported that those with asthma or related breathing problems may be at as much as *nine* times greater risk for heart attack, stroke, arthritis, diabetes and depression after age 55, compared to those who do not suffer asthma (Adams et al, 2006). This is daunting news, especially coupled with the fact that the American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology estimates that by 2020 more than one out of every four "Baby Boomers" will be affected by asthma.

What is causing what some have called a 21st century epidemic of breathing problems? More importantly, is there anything that you can do to lower your risk or fortify your lungs?

Fortunately, recent studies suggest that several key nutrients—including a common food—can provide powerful support for healthy lungs and may be vital to your entire respiratory system.

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### How Breathing Problems Begin

Most breathing problems, including asthma, often begin in childhood. Stressful events (such as severe illness, trauma or dramatic exposure to environmental aggravators like smog and air pollution) can leave a physical imprint on the receptor sites of cells in the lungs. Scientists reporting in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* note that a stressful event in childhood can leave the lungs about 80% less responsive to the body's natural hormones later in life (Miller & Chen, 2006).

To compensate for this insensitivity, pediatric doctors routinely prescribe inhalers filled with synthetic prescription steroid-hormone drugs. Unfortunately, a child may develop a dependency on inhalers, relying on those steroid hormones before engaging in any physical activity.

While some so-called health experts continue to rail against this phenomenon and urge people to throw away their inhalers, to do so without a "back-up plan" is not only irresponsible but also medically inaccurate. Unless directed to do so by a doctor, no person with asthma should throw away an emergency inhaler. However, there may be natural ways to make attacks less frequent, especially if one makes use of certain supplemental nutrients that can support healthy lung tissue and encourage respiratory system health.

## An Apple a Week?

It may surprise you to learn that one method includes a new take on the old "apple a day" adage. Apples are a rich source of potassium, which is particularly important for those who use inhalers on a regular basis. High doses of steroids or overuse of inhalers can deplete potassium to dangerous levels requiring emergency-room treatment. Just one apple a week can prevent this depletion.

A study of 13,000 adults in the Netherlands found that regular consumption of apples (and pears, also a good source of potassium) was positively correlated with strong lung capacity and negatively correlated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Scientists at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California found that children who consumed the lowest levels of potassium-rich fruits and vegetables also demonstrated the lowest breathing capacity (Gilliland et al, 2002).

## Herbs and Botanicals Support Healthy Breathing

In addition to munching on apples and pears, it may be wise to add a few more exotic nutrients to your dietary regimen. For example, the Chinese herb *Scutellaria*—first listed some 2,200 years ago in *The Divine Husbandman's Classic of the Materia Medica*, the oldest known textbook of medicine—has been touted as a method for helping ease "hot lungs," coughing, fever and tension. Modern testing has found that this herb impacts histamine without sedation, possibly affecting the number of asthma attacks triggered by allergies (Nakajima et al, 2001).

## Throw Away Your Salt Shaker!

A new study funded by the British health organization Asthma UK will attempt to elaborate on the newest culprit behind sudden asthma attacks—excess dietary salt. Although the British study will seek to provide the last word on whether too much salt can really trigger asthma, there's already a growing body of evidence that people at risk for constricted airways should limit their consumption of sodium.

Sodium seems to interfere with cellular uptake of the mineral magnesium, which plays a key role in lung health. In fact, injections of magnesium are standard treatment in the emergency room for severe asthma attacks.

The good news about the relationship between sodium and asthma is that a small decrease in the consumption of salt can promote a big decrease in the frequency of exercise-induced asthma attacks (Mickelborough, Lindley & Ray, 2005). The simplest way to lower your body's sodium levels? Drink more water!

If you are open to adding a specially-formulated nutritional supplement in order to maximize your own lung health, the following also may be some noteworthy nutrients to consider:

- Capsaicin (Cayenne extract) and *Glycyrrhiza Glabra* (licorice) seem to have a soothing effect on the throat, which can sometimes become irritated in people with asthma.
- The authoritative *Complete German Commission E Monographs* states that Fenugreek gently soothes the lining of the throat.
- Marshmallow and Mullein provide mucilages to add bulk to phlegm, making it easier to expectorate.
- Turnip Powder is a terrific natural source of the amino-acid histidine, which is particularly helpful in supporting nose, eyes and throat health.

## Lifestyle Changes for Your Lungs

Even though no one who has asthma or other breathing difficulties should discontinue prescribed medication without medical advice, it seems wise to

make some simple modifications to your diet and supplementation habits that can greatly impact and support healthy lungs. You may also consider making other lifestyle changes, such as limiting your intake of salt (see "Throw Away Your Salt Shaker!").

In addition, drinking water can help. Some medical literature suggests that dehydrated cells in the linings of the bronchial passageways are especially susceptible to inflammation and rupture. Proper hydration will not prevent asthma attacks unrelated to exercise, but it may significantly reduce the severity of an adverse event (Yun, Lee & Bazar, 2005).

Whichever strategy you choose, the good news is that there are several simple and proactive steps that you can take right now to foster your improved health and maximize the healthy outlook for your lungs and respiratory system.


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