New Study Suggests Asthma Could Have a Natural Fix!

Researchers have discovered that African American children with asthma in metropolitan Washington, DC, are significantly more likely to have low levels of vitamin D than healthy children. This study supports recent research that suggests vitamin D plays a greater role in the body than just keeping bones healthy. Vitamin D deficiency has been recently linked to a variety of non-bone related diseases including depression, autoimmune disorders, and now asthma.

The research team found that 86 percent of the children in the study with asthma had insufficient levels of vitamin D, while only 19 percent of non-asthmatics had these low levels.

Only 5 to 37 percent of American infants meet the standard for vitamin D set by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Although breast milk is the perfect food in every other way, it's often low in vitamin D. Since humans originated in equatorial areas with year-round sunshine, babies in the distant past wouldn't have needed to get vitamin D from breast milk. Many mothers also are vitamin D-deficient. Based on these facts, researchers now recommend that most babies should take a daily vitamin D supplement, reports USA Today.

In addition, Mothering Magazine offers several tips on how natural medicine can strengthen immune function to prevent asthma attacks.

Oriental medicine and Chinese herbs have the ability to directly strengthen immune function. The disadvantage of herbs is their bad taste, and the most effective strategy for children is to mix liquid extracts of herbs with juice to improve their taste.

A licensed acupuncturist experienced in the treatment of children can assess an individual child's needs and prescribe an herbal formula to relieve congestion and build immune function.
Massaging specific points on your child's body during asthmatic episodes helps to relieve cough, induce relaxation, and decrease wheezing. The techniques fall into two categories: pressing on acupuncture points and massage of acupuncture channels. Both are simple, straightforward, and require no training.

For more details, please see the full article in Mothering Magazine.

Sources:
» Mothering Magazine March 2010
» Eurekalert March 19, 2010
» USA Today March 22, 2010

Comments:

Asthma is a growing problem, both for children and adults. In fact, asthma now affects some 20 million Americans, as it has increased by more than 300 percent over the last 20 years.

Wouldn't you like to have a simple, highly effective and incredibly inexpensive treatment for this very serious illness?

Unfortunately most physicians are clueless about using vitamin D to treat asthma, but by subscribing to this site you can easily keep abreast of the latest that science has to offer in providing safe, inexpensive natural therapies to common problem.

That is what we specialize in.

If vitamin D is indeed a major underlying cause of asthma, which it surely appears to be, many are needlessly suffering with a potentially life threatening ailment since vitamin D deficiency is easily remedied.

Not to mention the fact that many are needlessly exposing themselves to the dangers inherent with the standard drug treatments for asthma.

Advair, for example, contains the long-acting beta-agonist (LABA) salmeterol. A 2006 analysis found that regular use of LABAs can increase the severity of an asthma attack. Researchers estimate that salmeterol may contribute to as many as 5,000 asthma-related deaths in the United States each year.

Conventional asthma treatments can also increase your risk of heart disease and osteoporosis, just to name a few.

So isn't it great to know that there is an effective, and infinitely safer, method to treat asthma?!

Vitamin D Deficiency Likely an Underlying Cause of Asthma
According to the senior author of the study: "For African American kids with asthma, vitamin D testing and ensuring adequate vitamin D intake may need to become necessary steps in their primary care."

Yes!

And this does not apply to African Americans exclusively. As reported by USA Today, a mere five to 37 percent of all American infants meet the standard for vitamin D set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is at a mere 400 IU’s per day! This dose was recommended to prevent rickets, which works well, but does not provide protection from more serious diseases such as cancer, heart disease, infections and probably asthma as well.

Previous research has shown that the pediatric recommended daily allowance is woefully inadequate for most children, stating that many infants may need as much as 10 times that amount to reap all the health benefits. In addition, it’s important to realize that you are laying the groundwork for your child's health while still in the womb.

One 2007 study discovered that poor diets and the lack of vitamin D among mothers were the determining factors in whether their children suffered from asthma, independent of the child’s own vitamin D intake after birth.

There are also several other studies showing the beneficial impact of vitamin D on lung health.

This makes perfect sense once you know that just one of the 3,000 genes vitamin D upregulates is a gene that produces over 200 anti-microbial peptides, some of which work like a broad-spectrum antibiotic.

Here’s a short list of studies confirming the inverse association between lower respiratory tract infections and 25(OH)D levels in children. Meaning, the higher your child’s vitamin D level, the lower his risk of contracting respiratory tract infections:

1. A 2009 study on vitamin D deficiency in newborns with an upper respiratory infection (URI) confirmed a strong, positive correlation between newborns’ and mother’s vitamin D levels. Over 87 percent of all newborns and over 67 percent of all mothers had vitamin D levels lower than 20 ng/ml, which is a severe deficiency state. Newborns with vitamin D deficiency appear to have an increased risk of developing a URI, and since the child’s vitamin D level strongly correlates with its mother’s, the researchers recommend that all mothers optimize their vitamin D levels during pregnancy, especially in the winter months, to safeguard their baby’s health.

2. A similar Indian study published in 2004 also reported that vitamin D deficiency in infants significantly raised their odds ratio for having severe a URI.
3. A 2009 analysis of the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey examined the association between vitamin D levels and recent upper respiratory infections (URI) in nearly 19,000 subjects over the age of 12. There was a positive correlation between lower vitamin D levels and increased risk of URI, and this correlation was even stronger in individuals with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

4. Another 2009 report in the journal Pediatric Research stated that infants and children appear more susceptible to viral rather than bacterial infections when deficient in vitamin D. And that, based on the available evidence showing a strong connection between vitamin D, infections, and immune function in children, vitamin D supplementation may be a valuable therapy in pediatric medicine.

Yes, optimizing your immune function is an essential part of treating asthma, and vitamin D is proven to be an incredibly powerful immune modulator, which is why optimizing your child’s vitamin D levels should be at the very top of your list.

**How to Optimize Your Child’s Vitamin D Levels**

Remember, it is quite likely that your child will need far more than the recommended daily allowance, which is a mere 400 units a day. You really need to make sure your child is getting therapeutic levels.

Ideally, your child would get his vitamin D from safe sun exposure, although many children spend more time outdoors than their parents, many are still not getting nearly enough sun exposure – particularly if you slather them with sunscreen.

I recommend you allow your child to spend some time outdoors without sunscreen. But you do want to be very careful and make sure your child does not get sunburned!

You can tell he’s had enough exposure when his skin turns the lightest shade of pink. After that his body will not produce any more vitamin D and continued exposure is only going to cause skin damage.

If your child does not have access to regular sun exposure, I do recommend oral supplements. You can also use vitamin D drops for children who are too young to swallow a pill.

Based on the latest research, the recommended dosage for children is 35 IU’s of vitamin D per pound of body weight. There is one caveat however, and that is it would be helpful to get your child’s vitamin D levels tested after starting oral supplements, to ensure they’re within the therapeutic range of 50-70 ng/ml.

You also want to make sure you’re using the correct test, and a reputable lab. In the US, I recommend using LabCorp. If you get it done by Quest, you’ll need to divide your result by 1.3 to get the “real” number.

For more information, please review this previous article that explains the available tests and the differences between labs in more detail.
If you get your child’s levels to about 60 ng/ml, there’s a strong likelihood -- especially if you combine it with exercise and balancing out her omega 3 and omega 6 fats as described below -- that she will not experience asthma anymore.

**Additional Safe and Effective Strategies to Treat Asthma**

Although asthma is a serious disease, safely treating your asthma is not a complicated affair. Optimizing your child’s vitamin D levels is the first step, but there are other basic, simple strategies that can help treat the root of the problem as well.

The *Mothering Magazine* article sourced above contains a variety of helpful methods to help strengthen your child’s immune system to prevent asthma attacks, and natural therapies that can help soothe the symptoms of asthma, so feel free to read through that as well.

In my experience, the following strategies are highly effective when treating asthma:

- **Increase your child’s intake of animal-based omega 3 fats** – I can’t emphasize enough the importance of getting sufficient amounts of high quality animal-based omega 3 fats in your child’s diet.

  Although I strongly believe we all need plant-based omega 3 fats, the difference is that most people do not possess the metabolic machinery to rapidly convert the ALA in these plants to the higher order fats DHA and EPA, which are potent anti-inflammatories.

  Although I still recommend fish oil in some instances, I believe krill oil is an even better source of omega 3 fats for most people.

- **Reduce your child’s intake of omega 6 fats** – In addition to adding omega 3 fats to your child’s diet, you also want to reduce the amount of omega 6 fats he consumes because the ratio between these two fats is very important.

  Many don’t realize that about a century ago, people only consumed 1-2 pounds of plant-based omega 6 fats per year. Today, the average American is consuming about 75-80 pounds a year of these vegetable oils, such as corn oil, soy and safflower oil.

  When you eat lots of them, which you will if you use a lot of processed foods, the balance between omega 3 and omega 6 fats will become distorted, which can cause the type of inflammation that leads to asthma.

- **Consider the hygiene hypothesis** – There’s a tendency in our modern culture to be obsessive about cleanliness, especially in children. However, this may not be as healthy as initially thought. It appears that being exposed to common bacterial and viral infections as a child can be instrumental in providing the stimulus to your immune system to prevent asthma naturally.

- **Get regular exercise** – Exercise (especially out in fresh air if you’re an asthmatic) is actually crucial, as it helps to moderate insulin levels. It increases your insulin receptor sensitivity, and as a result your body produces less insulin, which tends to optimize it.

You can also use allergy testing to build up your child’s immune system. However, my experience is that conventional testing does not work very effectively and there is a fair amount of risk. A far better test would be provocation neutralization testing, which is an intradermal skin test.
The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) has a list of physicians who are trained in this highly effective technique.

**As for natural remedies, you can try some Butterbur** (Petasites hybridus). This perennial shrub has been used since ancient times to treat a variety of conditions. As far back as the 17th century, butterbur was used to treat coughs, asthma, and skin wounds.

Researchers have since identified the compounds in butterbur that help reduce symptoms in asthma by inhibiting leukotrienes and histamines, which are responsible for symptom aggravation in asthma.

Also remember that pasteurized milk products are notorious for making asthma worse.

**Conclusion**

Vitamin D is such an essential part of optimal health, and the research being done in this area is mounting as we speak. I believe educating the public about optimizing their vitamin D levels is so important, I've created a brand new site dedicated to vitamin D.

I urge you to bookmark it, share it with your friends and family, and revisit often.

After all, wouldn’t you agree it’s a safer and wiser strategy to address the cause of your disease, rather than treating the symptoms with expensive, potentially dangerous drugs?

As it turns out, vitamin D deficiency is at the core of countless diseases and health problems, and the cure couldn’t be safer or simpler!

If you follow these simple strategies discussed above, you can virtually eliminate your need for bronchodilators and steroid drugs, for example, and THAT’S a perfect example of taking control of your and your family’s health!