

Asthma

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During my first year of medical school I experienced the benefits of osteopathic manipulation for asthma. As a child, I had significant difficulties with allergies and asthma. Gradually my symptoms lessened as I matured. But even in college and medical school I struggled with frequent upper respiratory illnesses.

In medical school, the extra time I spent in the anatomy lab preparing for exams triggered asthma symptoms. This proved to be frustrating, as I needed more energy, not less. Fortunately, I had been paired with a second-year student with a keen interest in Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). He treated me and to my surprise the feelings of shortness of breath dissipated. I was relieved to find that I no longer needed inhaled medication. Furthermore, despite the continuing intensity of medical school, the frequency of my upper respiratory infections began to abate. Having suffered for many years from the aggravating

effects of asthma and allergic sensitivities I experienced the benefits of OMT first hand. How I wish my family had been introduced to the benefits of OMT when I was a child! Rather than merely suppressing symptoms, osteopathic medicine addresses the underlying disturbances in the body's mechanisms. In asthma, medications are prescribed to cause dilation of the bronchioles. However, through properly applied manipulation, the body can be stimulated to release its own supply of these same chemicals. Proper circulation is absolutely necessary for effective function of the lungs. The arteries supply nutrition to vital organs and tissues in the body, while its counterpart returns the deoxygenated blood back to the heart through the veins. Osteopathic manipulation strengthens these vital pathways while removing roadblocks to the body's natural healing process.

Have you ever tried to take a deep breath with your rib cage locked? It is very difficult. Another goal in the osteopathic treatment of asthma is to create free motion in the rib cage and thoracic diaphragm. Osteopathic techniques to enhance drainage of the lymph nodes also help the immune system with its housecleaning tasks. OMT can also be effective when a child has taken a hard fall. Many times a

fall to the tailbone will trigger an asthma attack in a child. This is due to the relation of the tailbone to the "primary response mechanism." Making sure the sacrum (tailbone) is moving properly is very important in successfully treating asthma.

Nutrition happens to be one of the best weapons in the prevention of asthmatic episodes. There is a clear relationship between poor nutrition and bronchial difficulties caused by asthma.

A healthy diet should include fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. Vitamin C, bioflavonoids, ginger and tumeric help reduce inflammation. Foods that promote inflammation such as fried foods, junk food, smoked or barbecued foods, and partially hydrogenated foods should be avoided as well as mucus-forming foods including milk, sugar, refined flour, and most dairy products. It is important to read labels and avoid all chemicals and additives. Do you know that modified wheat starch contained in many cereals and processed foods is "modified" by six chemicals all of which can cause allergies and asthma? Food is one of our best medicines-- use it wisely!

Airborne substances can also trigger asthma. Smoke, high pollen counts, vacuuming, dust, animal hairs, and mold growth commonly trigger asthmatic attacks. Using a hepa filter on all filtering machines, keeping your windows closed from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. during high pollen count periods, and vacuuming with a sealed system with a hepa filter attached will reduce exposure. Routine cleaning and dusting of bedding reduces build up and the invitation for an airborne substance to trigger an asthmatic episode. Washing sheets in hot water kills dust mites and cleaning with vinegar or a 10% bleach solution will prevent mold growth.

Osteopathic Manipulative Therapy is an effective means of treating and managing asthmatic conditions for children. Coupled with a strong nutritional and environmental program I have seen amazing transformations in health-- for all family members!

I wish you all the best in health!