

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



October 2004

Asthma Management is Key to Sufferers' Health

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 23 million adults and 9 million children in the United States suffer from asthma. Each year, approximately 4,500 people die and nearly half a million people are hospitalized from asthma attacks. Asthma costs an estimated \$9 billion in direct medical costs and \$4 billion in lost productivity annually. Although many drugs are available to help control asthma, it is still a poorly managed disease.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease which can be life-threatening. Asthma is characterized by chronic inflammation in the lungs making the sufferer sensitive to stimuli which can trigger an asthma attack. Common triggers include:

- Respiratory infections and colds
- Cigarette smoke
- Allergic reactions to pollen, mold, animal dander, feathers or dust
- Indoor or outdoor air pollutants
- Exercise
- Exposure to cold air or sudden temperature change
- Excitement and stress

What is an Asthma Attack?

When an attack is triggered, changes occur in the lungs: cells produce excess mucus, air tubes swell and muscles in air tubes tighten. These changes cause the air tubes to narrow, making breathing difficult.

Asthma attacks can be mild, moderate or severe. Mild and moderate asthma attacks are most common. Symptoms may include tightness in the chest, coughing or spitting up mucus, wheezing when breathing, or difficulty sleeping. The victim of a mild or moderate attack should take their medicine as prescribed to help open up their air tubes in their lungs. The victim should contact the doctor if the medicine does not work in the specified amount of time.

Symptoms of a severe attack may include breathlessness, inability to talk, tight neck muscles, blue or gray lips or fingernails, or sucked in ribs. In the case of a severe asthma attack, the victim should take their medicine and seek medical help immediately.

How can Asthma Sufferers Manage their Health?

Because asthma is a chronic condition, asthma sufferers should work closely with their doctors to manage their condition. They should take their medicine as prescribed and seek help when symptoms don't improve.

Asthma sufferers should also work with their doctors to identify their asthma triggers. Once identified, they should remove as many triggers from their homes as possible. Using air filters and air conditioners can help to make their homes cleaner and more comfortable.



Sufferers should take extra care to keep their bedrooms free from triggers. Experts recommend removing carpeting and draperies, putting mattresses and pillows in allergen impermeable covers, washing bedding weekly in hot water, dusting frequently, and prohibiting pets in bedrooms.

For more information, visit the American Lung Association website at www.lungusa.org.

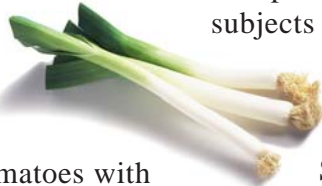
Fat in salad dressing aids absorption of nutrients



A recent study at the University of Ohio reports that fat in salad dressing can actually help the body to absorb vital nutrients. The study

measured the amount of cancer-fighting carotenoids that were absorbed into the bloodstream of volunteers after they consumed salads with either full-fat, low-fat or fat-free salad dressings.

During the twelve week study, each volunteer ate three salads containing a mixture of spinach, lettuce, carrots and tomatoes with salad dressings containing 0, 6 or 28 grams of canola oil. For 12 hours after eating a salad, the researchers took hourly blood samples from each volunteer. The blood samples were then analyzed



for the presence of three carotenoids—alpha-carotene, beta-carotene and lycopene—which help to fight against cancer and heart disease.

The study found that when subjects ate salad with the fat-free dressing, virtually no carotenoids were absorbed into the bloodstream. Carotenoid absorption increased with the low-fat dressing. However, carotenoid absorption was the greatest when subjects ate salads with full-fat dressing.

Wendy White, an Ohio State professor and the lead researcher on the study, said, “Our findings are actually consistent with U.S. dietary guidelines, which support a diet moderate, rather than very low, in fat.”



White insists that she is not advocating a high-fat diet, but explains that adding small amounts of fat, such as a little cheese or avocado, to a salad may help with the absorption of carotenoids.

White said, “What we found compelling was that some of our more popular healthful snacks, like baby carrots, really need to be eaten with a source of fat for us to absorb the beta carotene.”



CHP Welcomes Rebecca Hartt

The County Health Pool is pleased to welcome Rebecca Hartt. Rebecca joined CHP as a benefits administrator in August.

In the next few months, Rebecca Hartt and John Britton, a fellow benefits administrator, will be visiting CHP member entities to assist members with their health care coverage needs and to provide training on a variety of health care industry topics. The training is designed to help employees and their dependents become wise consumers of health care and to alert them to the costs.

County Health Pool Word Search

Can you find the following words hidden in this puzzle?

- ALLERGY
- ASTHMA
- BOARD
- CARROTS
- DIET
- EXERCISE
- FILTER
- LUNGS
- PETS
- RENEWAL
- SALAD
- SPINACH
- SYMPTOMS
- WHEEZING

