

How Can I Help my Baby or Young Child with Asthma?

Working with Young Children

The Primary Carer is the best person able to improve the child's health. They should be prepared to work closely with the child. They need to improve their own breathing using the Buteyko Method. Therefore they should be trained by a Buteyko practitioner and understand asthma and how it affects their child. They should also be encouraged to closely observe their child for changes in appearance and behaviour to help them accurately monitor the child's condition.

If at all possible, a mother should breastfeed their child for at least a year. There is a mountain of evidence showing that this improves and strengthens the child's health (fewer allergies, respiratory problems, better immune system) as well as the mother's. For more information, go to the Le Leche League.

Mental and Physical Stimulation of the Child

When the child is healthy, mentally and physically stimulation should be encouraged. However, during displays of illness, mental and physical stimulation should be discouraged. The adult should stay calm and reassure the child during illness and attacks so not to alarm the child. Regulate the child's temperature with clothing not thermostats. The child can walk barefoot around the house and outside during mild months. Keep doors open to circulate the cool to warm fresh air in the house. Warm to cool baths are better than hot baths, with a contrasting shower at the end.

For young infants, studies show that extended skin to skin contact is extremely helpful for the cultivation of general health, the immune system, the bonding process, prevention of SIDS. Snugglies are also very good, preferable to the portable cradles or strollers. The infant should not face outward but inward in snugglies. Their ability to focus is less than 3 feet for several months. They do not need that visual stimulation and in fact are in a more vulnerable position in facing outward. Facing inward with the natural protection of a parent's hand on their back or bottom is preferable. Also, stimulation of the posterior diaphragm helps in healthy development of the lungs, particularly premies.

During distress:

1) Gently cuddle the child in an upright position – chest to chest. Slow your own breathing and rock. The child's breathing synchronizes with the "cuddler's" breathing. The rocking rhythm should be slow and gentle in an upright position.

2) Very gently rubbing or patting the child's back around the diaphragmatic area helps to settle the breathing into that area. Gently humming a lullaby or favourite song of the child is extremely soothing to the child and therefore the breathing. This is a healthy bedtime "ritual" and most helpful when the child is ill or upset.

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Food:

- 1) Discourage overeating
- 2) Feed the child when they ask for it and do not force them to eat more than they want
- 3) The food should be simple and bland.
- 4) A priority of wheat, rice, corn, oats, or millet, either peas or a Soya bean etc. and vegetables before animal protein.
- 5) Reduction of milk and dairy products, This may take about 4 days to see results.
- 6) Water with sea salt. Kids drink juice which actually doesn't get much water into the system since it takes a lot of water to process the sugar that is in the juice.
- 7) Remove sugars from diet.
- 8) Read Batmanghelidj MD, "Why Our Body's Many Cries For Water," He is very knowledgeable about water.
- 9) Check for candida. One course of antibiotics can set this up in a young child.

Medication

Steroid Medication's are used to prevent symptoms occurring ("the lowest dose which keeps the child symptom free")

Non-Steroids Preventers can be used such as Singular or Tilade. They have fewer side effects than steroids but can take up to six weeks to be fully effective.

Reliever Medication is only used to relieve symptoms and only then 1 puff at a time. Reliever with Nubuliser should be used only until symptoms ease not until the nebule is empty.

Combination Medication is not recommended due to making the condition slowly deteriorate unnoticed.

Sleeping

- 1) A cool room, with good ventilation and light, warm bedclothes prevent overheating during the night.
- 2) Dustmite issue of bedding and soft toys. No carpets or dust-gathering window coverings. No electronic devices near the head of the bed.
- 3) 100% natural fabrics for bedclothes and pjamas (skin breathes better, less chance of overheating and sweating through the night. Swaddling is recommended for very young children.
- 4) Put yellow pages phone book under the legs of the bed at the head end or pillows under the mattress at the head end of the bed. If in hospital crank up the head end of the bed. Prop the head of his bed up a bit by using a foam wedge under the pillow.
- 5) Parents sleeping in the same bed or room as their child for several nights and gently closing the mouth with the fingers when it opens. This is the best strategy with younger children (under 5yo). There is some evidence that family beds can reduce the incidence of SIDS.
- 6) Gently placing a hand on or over the mouth to remind oneself to at least start the night with the mouth closed.
- 7) Family beds provide a sense of protection of an infant that a crib does not. There is some evidence that the increased CO2 in the family bed environment contributes favourably to an infant's healthy breathing. Also, the micro-movements of parents may play a part in the prevention of SIDS and the development of respiratory problems.

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- 8) Using a piece of micropore tape (2.5 cm wide or less) placed vertically from top lip to chin is useful for children over 4. Tab on lower edge. Remove most of the sticky adhesive on skin prior to applying. If lips are dry, moisturiser can be applied to stop sticking to chapped skin.
- 9) Anything that makes it easier for them to breathe through their nose will help, a little bit of Vicks or menthol. Putting eucalyptus oil on the collar of pyjamas is also beneficial.
- 10) It is important that children sleep on their side as this will decrease breathing rate and intake as well as reduce the possibility of snoring.

Encouraging nose breathing with small children

- 1) Use a pacifier (dummy)
- 2) Teach the child to close their mouth while eating. They will see that an open mouth while eating is unattractive and impolite.
- 3) Teach Child to close mouth to keep flies from flying in.
- 4) Teach children to close mouth to Stop Asthma Witch from flying in and causing an Asthma attack (do not over do this one, may cause nightmares!)
- 5) Encourage them to smell the air, flowers and other things and objects - breathing through their nose.
- 6) If they like playing in the bath, blowing bubbles slowly under water
- 7) Picking up toys off the floor and putting them in a basket when nose breathing
- 8) Humming songs or tunes together.
- 9) The water game: Take a drink from one cup and spit it in to another cup, as confidence grows put the cup a bit further away, then into the next room, then across the garden.
- 10) Talking to them about breathing like a cat and not like a dog.
- 11) Have little games to see if they can breathe through their nose while they walk, run and jump etc.

Coughing fits Recommendations:

- 1) steroid inhaler (if prescribed by your doctor)
- 2) blocks of wood under legs at the head of the bed or cushions under the head end of the mattress.
- 3) Play the water game i.e. holding water in his mouth then walking through to the bathroom to spit it out into the sink.
- 4) Pinching the nose and holding for 3-5 seconds. Sipping water. Sucking on a non-sugar hard candy.
- 5) Cup hands over mouth before, during and after coughing.

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Other things to consider:

- adenoids and tonsils are unhealthy, swollen or too big.
 - vaccinations can create significant inflammation often felt in the ears and called ear infections. Antibiotics are prescribed which stress the immune system and removes protection in the gut. Natren (www.natren.com) replaces friendly intestinal bacteria, immune response and therefore lowering breathing. See Michael Schmidt Ph.D "Healing Childhood Ear Infections"
 - Leo Galland "Superimmunity for Kids" is familiar with how important the good intestinal flora are (probiotics)
 - FOS (Fructo Oligosaccharides) which feeds the good bacteria in the intestine and cannot be used by the bad.
 - Intestinal infestation (worms) can really disturb the breathing. Once the eosinophyl level (indicative of infestation) in the blood is raised respiratory symptoms manifest. Obviously deworming the family and any pets helps.
 - Does the child have good posture?
 - Does the child spend a great deal of time indoors? Does s/he get enough exercise?
 - Listening to quiet, rhythmical and classical music steadies the heart and breathing.
 - Does the child spend a great deal of time indoors? Does s/he get enough exercise?
 - Is the child hypoglycaemic?
 - Are there structural irregularities in nose, face, jaw?
- * Prof. Buteyko recommended a dummy and tight chest clothing (I would suggest made of cotton).

Disclaimer:

The above notes do not represent medical advice but are a compilation of approaches that have been beneficial in particular situations.

You are advised to assess what you use based on your child's situation.

The parents should have a basic understanding of the Buteyko Method to derive most value from these notes.

Please consult your GP or Buteyko Practitioner if in any doubt.

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