

Asthma: Its Cost, Alternatives, and Prevention

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According to the New York Times report on asthma, printed on their front page on Sunday, October 13th, this condition costs us in the U.S. about 56 billion dollars every year. That is a sizable chunk of change and a good part of it goes to the pharmaceutical companies making the drugs that allow asthmatics to breathe.

People are looking for alternatives to this problem and the expense that comes with it and while we don't offer an alternative to treatment there is a good alternative that prevents it, at least a good share of it. You can find this written up for the journal *The Clinical Practice of Alternative Medicine*, published by the American College for the Advancement of Medicine in 2001. This was a peer reviewed journal, but only in its second year so it was not indexed.

Most medical journals are indexed by the national library of medicine so that doctors and researchers can find out what is new, but this journal was new and it was not indexed. The result was that no one ever knew about what happens with asthma when your nose is clean. My experience was that it goes away. That article is reprinted here with permission from ACAM.

This experience is an example of the understanding that comes with seeing in a new way. Toyota has a mantra that is prominently displayed in their plants: **You can't understand until you see, and you can't see until you do.** Aimed at making cars more efficiently by promoting and incorporating ideas of the workers this also works in other areas.

In my practice I played with the noses of people with respiratory conditions like asthma, and eventually I found something that worked; that was the doing. I looked at how the nose cleans itself and for ways to help that process. When I found it, I saw differently; I saw that asthma is part our immune defenses, the system we all have that protects us from invaders like viruses, bacteria, and other toxins. When the sensors in the nose identify such problems they turn on the allergic response to try to flush them out. If this doesn't work it shuts down the airway to protect the more vulnerable lungs from the pollutants in the upper airway. This is seeing differently and I think this seeing differently enables a better understanding of what asthma is and how it can be prevented.

What made the difference in the patients I treated was a sugar-like substance called xylitol. Several characteristics make it a reasonable choice: first of all it prevents the adherence of the bacteria that cause the most problems in the nose; and secondly it works by osmosis to pull fluid into the nose so that our own mucociliary clearing can be optimal. This latter factor is likely a leading reason for the increases we have had, and are continuing to experience, with asthma.

Arundel showed several years ago that changes in humidity are associated with increases in upper respiratory problems like asthma. This is a graph from his report. The question here is why there was insufficient data for respiratory infections when the humidity is high. The upper levels of the chart

[Figure: Humidity-Chart-Animation1-e1381845613508]

show that viruses and bacteria are present when it is dry (they hang on to dust particles) as well as when it is wet (they hang onto water droplets). The only reason for the scarcity of data for respiratory infections when the

humidity is high is that the nose is more able to cope with the pollutants and wash them out when there is more water in the air we breathe. Xylitol helps here by pulling fluid into the nose from the body when it is not in the air so normal nasal cleaning is possible even when the humidity is low, as it is in our centrally heated and cooled homes and offices.

The Finns have pioneered the use of xylitol for medical reasons. They began using it for sugar during the shortages of WW II. After the war they realized that the people using xylitol had less tooth decay. Beginning in the late 1960s clinical studies with xylitol have shown that chewing gum sweetened with xylitol 5 times a day prevents about 80% of tooth decay. It does this because, just like it does with nasal pathogens, it prevents the major decay causing bacteria from holding on in the mouth. I began playing with it in the nose because chewing the gum also prevents about 40% of childhood ear infections and they start from bacteria living in the back of the nose. My experience with the nasal use of xylitol in preventing ear infections was much better than the 40% they saw with oral use and is also reported in the referenced article above for those interested.

The bottom line here is that asthma needs to be rethought. It is a defense that protects the more vulnerable lungs from the infectious agents and pollutants (that look on a molecular level like serious toxins) that are sensed in the nose. And many of them can be prevented if not totally eliminated by simply keeping the nose clean. Try it. A nasal spray containing xylitol was voted BEST NEW NATURAL MEDICINE by America's health food industry in 2004 and is available across the country and around much of the world. And yes, xylitol is safe when sprayed into the nose. It is not absorbed in the nose but works locally to effect both the bacteria and the water levels. Then it is swallowed. If one were to spray their nose every hour for 24 hours they would eat about half a plums worth of xylitol.

Another reason few know about the benefits is that xylitol is not a drug. You can buy xylitol at your local high end market or health food store. Drug companies need control of the active substance so that they can charge the prices and make the profits discussed in the *Times* article. Such control is not possible with xylitol. The result is that the manufacturers cannot tell people about the benefits seen with its use. It's kind of like soap and water. We all know that washing hands prevents the spread of communicable diseases, but you will never see such a claim on a bar of soap. Our advice is 'When you wash your hands, wash your nose'.