3 Ways to Treat Asthma Naturally

by KRYSTINA OSTERMEYER

How to Treat Asthma Naturally

As someone who has suffered from asthma for almost all of my life, I've been on a variety of asthma medications. As a nurse, I've also taken care of a lot of people with asthma.

And as a young person interested in taking care of myself to the best of my ability, I've looked into natural treatments for asthma.

I want to preface this by saying that I've always listened to the advice of my physicians – I take my inhalers as prescribed, especially when I'm feeling rough. I use my rescue inhaler religiously before exercise – and carry it with me while I'm on the run *just in case* I need it!

But I've done some research into natural and holistic treatments for asthma because I believe that conventional and holistic medicine can coexist – and I think my breathing is better for it.

Here are some of the best natural asthma treatments I've found – and what research says may work.

1. Fish Oil

Fish oil seems to be one of those wonder supplements – you've likely heard that it is powerful in the use of heart disease, as well as a myriad of other conditions.

Well, add asthma to the list of conditions that it can help!

In a study published in *JCI Insight*, researchers at UR Medicine's Mary Parkes Asthma Center collected blood from 17 patients. The B immune cells were isolated to examine the impact of omega-3 products on IgE antibodies (IgE is produced in response to allergy and asthma symptoms.)

The results were compared to people without asthma. It was found that participants who took omega-3 fatty acid supplements had a reduction in supplements, except for those who received oral corticosteroids, which blocked the effect of the supplement.

The research is promising but keep in mind that this study is on a very small-scale, as are the other studies that have been done. Fish oil is generally a safe supplement for most people, but still should be discussed with your physician before using it.

2. Turmeric

Turmeric, also known as curcumin, is quite the buzzword in natural health these days. As such, it is being studied as a treatment for many different health conditions – particularly those of an inflammatory nature, such as asthma.

In a 2014 study published in the *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research,* curcumin 500mg twice daily was used as an add-on therapy for a group of patients, while the other group received just the "standard therapy." Pulmonary function testing was performed on days 0, 10, 20, and 30 in both groups of patients.

At the conclusion of 30 days, it was found that the use of curcumin as an add-on therapy was safe, with little to no side effects, and pulmonary function testing values had improved.

Researchers hypothesized this was due to the anti-inflammatory nature of curcumin. The researchers do note that their study was on a small scale (77 patients) and of short duration (30 days) and that further testing should be done on a larger scale.

Here's what I know from using turmeric as a supplement – my breathing improved, as did my chronic knee pain! However, this was my subjective opinion – we have to keep in mind that the research is promising, but is still in its infancy.

3. Magnesium

I started taking magnesium twice daily at the urging of my neurologist to treat my migraines. It helped my migraines a little bit, but I noticed that it helped my breathing. Coincidence? Maybe not!

According to *Clinical Advisor*, "Magnesium is known to relax smooth muscle cells by reducing intracellular calcium and exhibit an anti-inflammatory effect by balancing T-cells and suppressing mast cells. It also inhibits acetylcholine release and nitric acid and prostacyclin synthesis to decrease muscle fiber excitability."

So does that mean?

It may relax the muscle fibers of the lungs – especially during an asthma exacerbation. In fact, in several studies, it was used successfully in emergency situations intravenously for acute asthma exacerbations.

Some experts are hypothesizing that asthmatics may be magnesium deficient and are recommending that practitioners check their asthma patient's magnesium levels routinely – and supplementing as indicated.

Even asthma patients with therapeutic magnesium levels can benefit with a diet rich in magnesium, such as bananas, dark, leafy greens, whole grains, fish, yogurt, and dried fruits.

Pinpoint Your Triggers

Whether your physician is a medical doctor (MD) or a naturopathic doctor (ND), they both agree – reducing exposure to asthma triggers is of the utmost importance.

According to Dr. Bernie Noe, ND, "the natural treatment of asthma focuses on several key principles: reducing allergic exposure, reducing the sensitivity and spasticity of the airways of the lungs, balancing the allergic/inflammatory pathways in the body, and correcting nutrient imbalances."

The first step in this process is to determine what you are allergic to – and this is done by allergy testing. An allergist can perform skin allergy testing, or you can also opt for blood allergy testing. Once you have the results in hand, the real work begins – implementing a plan to reduce your exposure to these allergens!

Examples of common allergens include dust, molds, pollens, and foods. Food allergies are especially common in people with food allergies.

In fact, in 1981 a study was performed on 284 children with asthma – 75% of these children had some food sensitivity. Other studies have found that adults with asthma have a food allergy or sensitivity in 40% of cases.

The Bottom Line…

Any medications that your physician prescribes should be utilized *exactly* as prescribed. Natural treatments may improve symptoms, but you should discuss them with your physician before adding them to your regimen.