Asthma and the Importance of Flu Prevention

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Cold and Flu Prevention

Colds and flu are common causes of flare-ups in asthma suffer, and the children are the most affected. Even a mild viral infection can trigger severe wheezing and shortness of breath. In addition, the medication you take daily may fail to manage your asthma symptoms when you have a cold or flu and the flare-ups tend to be longer and last for several days to weeks. What can you do to prevent getting sick or minimize the symptoms in case you catch that cold or flu? Consider the following tips:

Where to Start

1. Book an appointment with your doctor. He will review your condition, adjust the treatment as needed and recommend preventive measures (be aware that you should not take the flu shot in a nasal spray form, as it is not recommended for people diagnosed with asthma).
2. Remember that cold and flu spread from respiratory droplets and these viruses are very contagious. That's why is so important to avoid contact with anyone who is sick and wash your hands as often as possible. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth because these are the points where viruses enter your body.
3. Have a bottle of hand sanitizer with you at all times when you are away from home. Use it anytime you touch objects that are frequently used by others – for example when you go to the bank, when you make a payment at the store, when you use the bus or train, before you eat.

4. A 2009 study conducted by researchers from the University of New South Wales found that surgical masks may offer the best protection against cold and flu. Adults who wear the mask at home were four times more likely to be protected against respiratory viruses (including common cold) compared with those who did not wear a mask. Note that surgical masks are different from those used by construction workers. Previously, CDC found that wearing mask and using hand sanitizer can decrease the flu symptoms in a community by half. When should you use the mask? Wear it during flu season, if you are sick, in crowded places or if someone at home has flu symptoms.
5. Keep your immune system strong and healthy so it will be easier to fight any infections, including colds and flu. Asthma has an increased prevalence in Western countries, and some scientists suggest that the diet may play a role. Furthermore, an increased in antioxidants intake (particularly vitamins E, C, Carotenoids, selenium, polyphenols and omega 3 fatty acids) could be beneficial, suggests a 2011 study featured in "The Journal Diabetic Association". Avoid fast foods, and include in your diet fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fish and lean meats, olive oil, nuts and seeds.
6. Take your multivitamins. Talk to a nutritionist or a pharmacist, as some vitamins require higher doses for cold and flu prevention and management. Several research papers show benefits from taking vitamins and mineral supplements in asthma patients. For example, a randomized placebo controlled study found that 1 g/day of vitamin C helped decrease asthma flare–ups by 78% in participants compared with those who took placebo (the dummy pill).