

Asthma can be controlled

Visalia Times-Delta, August 27, 2002

Asthma is a disease of the lungs. No one knows why some children get it and, so far, there is no cure.

However, it can be controlled. Your child can enjoy a happy, active life.

We do not like to think of children living with this type of illness, where the simple act of breathing can be very difficult for them. However, many children live with asthma every day, and research shows that it continues to increase among the young.

Typical comments from children on how it feels to have an asthma attack:

i "It's like someone is choking you and won't let go of your neck."

i "It's like staying under water for a long time."

i "When you breathe, it feels like tiny nails are in the air that poke and stab your lungs."

i "It feels like I'm breathing through a straw."

i "It feels like someone drove a huge hammer right through my chest and stomach."

When a child has asthma, the airways are sensitive to things like dust, smoke and pollen. If the child is exposed to these things, the muscles that wrap around the airways start to tighten. The airways also become inflamed.

Next, the lining swells and produces excess mucus. The airways get blocked, and the child has a hard time getting air in and out.

This is called a flare-up, or an attack.

Signs of a flare-up are coughing or wheezing, shortness of breath or faster breathing, chest or neck pulled in or hunched shoulders. As a parent, you can help your child control asthma by doing the following things:

- Work with your doctor to develop an action plan to prevent flare-ups.

- Know the early warning signs.

- Know what your child's triggers are.

- Teach your child to speak up when he/she needs to avoid a trigger.

- Let teachers, day-care providers, school nurses and babysitters know what to do if a flare-up occurs.

- Learn about your child's medications. Find out how they work, how they're taken and what the side effects are.

Most children with asthma can do all the things they like to do. Encourage your child to be active.

Help children follow their action plan and control triggers.

Also know when to call your doctor. You can help your child lead a normal life by learning as much as you can about asthma.

Information

Tulare County's Asthma Coalition at 685-3494. The Tulare County Asthma Coalition meets the fourth Tuesday of the month.

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This column is written by representatives of the Family Referral Education and Empowerment collaborative, which is funded by the Tulare County Children and Families Commission.

[Letter to the Editor, Merced Sun-Star, August 27, 2002](#)

We can reduce air pollution

Editor: In the past week, we in the Valley experienced one of the poorest air quality days so far.

This problem is only going to continue to get worse day by day. We are basically an enclosed ecosystem, something similar to a large garage with the ozone layer being the walls and door enclosing the earth. Now, if we were to close the garage door and turn on a car within the garage it wouldn't take long before we poisoned ourselves to death. Yes, we have managed to burn a hole in the ozone layer but this cannot be considered an escape valve for poison pressure when the reality is we've polluted Mother Earth, our air, our water, and ourselves. We are destroying

the very atmosphere protecting us from the dangerous rays of the sun and we are literally poisoning the very air our children breathe, so we are literally poisoning our children.

For years I have tried to bring to people's awareness whenever there are Save the Air Days and what we could try to do to at least not contribute unnecessarily to the millions of tons of pollution spewed into the air daily. I was told by so many, "What can I do? I'm only one person. Should I quit my job?" My reply is "Mother Theresa was only one person, Martin Luther King Jr. was only one person, Jesus was only one, Joan of Ark," etc., etc. If every sentient person in the valley, state, nation, would do just ONE thing to not pollute, the difference could be incalculable. If people would not use gas-powered lawn mowers but would instead use reel mowers (these are without any power beyond the one pushing and the sharpness of the blades) tons of pollution would be saved from the air. The physical, emotional, and mental benefits of using an old-fashioned lawn mower are an incentive for the health-minded. Perhaps those who drive to the gym so they can walk on a treadmill while watching themselves in the mirror would instead walk to the gym, then walk home. They could get the same benefits minus the mirror to watch themselves walk, as many gym routines. The money saved in car maintenance, gas, wear and tear as well as the money saved in membership fees might amount to enough to make energy efficient appliances or insulation in the home. I've found that another bonus to mowing the lawn by "me power" is the stress relief and therapeutic, mentally, quality in the sound, which also is non-polluting, when you push around one of these mowers. One could potentially save money in healthcare costs, gym fees, and therapist visits just with the simple acts of walking instead of driving whenever possible and mowing the lawn with a reel mower.

Walking is one of the most natural ways to have general good health. This includes cardiovascular, aerobic, and muscle toning benefits. Walking is free, easy, and with some hand weights (I use little rubber covered dumbbells) one has protection from dogs and with the right routine can bring noticeable results quickly. If people would carpool, walk, or ride a bicycle to work or school there would a huge reduction in the daily pollution levels. Several times on Save the Air Days I have observed the traffic on several of the busy roads and intersections in the area and have been absolutely appalled. During different times of the day the horrible fact is that 10 of 11; 18 of 20; and most recently at the intersection of Fifth and Broadway all the cars that went through had a single occupant. Not one car contained more than one person. Now I've lived in Atwater for quite sometime and know from personal experience that there really isn't too far to walk for the generally healthy individual in this town. Even when grocery shopping my son and I walked and we used the necessary negative of having to carry the heavy bags for the positive benefit of strengthening the arms, or bringing the difficulty level of the exercise routine up to another level.

These are only a very few possibilities open to us as citizens of the Earth to try and not further contribute to the pollution. Maybe we can even begin to live more healthy lifestyles and try to reverse, or repair, the damage we've done. I don't smoke cigarettes in your homes nor do I smoke in restaurants or any designated "no smoking" public areas. I don't because of inconvenience, laziness, or whatever, senselessly and needlessly poison your children by using gas lawn mowers, blowers, weed eaters, etc. I don't because it's hot, or impedes by comfort, drive all over doing errands without first trying to plan my driving so that only one trip is necessary or the most efficient route thought out so that any back and forth unnecessary driving is eliminated.

If we do not do something right now, immediately, to not only lessen the pollution but to repair the damage we have already done. We poison the very air our children need to breathe; we poison our children on a daily basis. I don't infuse the air your child breathes with my cigarette smoke, please, please stop poisoning the very air my son needs to breath to live. Please stop poisoning my son.

If every sentient person were to do just ONE thing to lesson their contribution of pollution and poisoning of the air the difference could be whether or not my son's children will be able to go outside and breathe the air at all. Or are we going to continue to live selfishly and so continue poisoning the very air our children breathe?

Ronda Bowser

Atwater

[Two Letters to the Editor, Modesto Bee, August 24, 2002:](#)

Connect the SUV dots

The recent letters from SUV owners seem to reflect their belief that they have an almost God-given right to purchase and drive these large, fuel-inefficient vehicles.

It would seem that these letter writers are unaware of the impact their vehicles' excessive emissions have on the environment: increased air pollution and global warming.

Additionally, it appears that these SUV owners haven't connected the dots -- driving a gas-guzzler equals more imports of foreign oil, which equals additional profits to oil-producing countries -- profits that could possibly be used to finance additional terrorist acts against the United States.

The writers apparently believe that they can drive anything they want and use as much gasoline as they want. Do they also believe that it will be OK to send young men and women to fight and die in the Middle East to protect the fuel supply for their gas-guzzling behemoths?

Given the environmental degradation and the possibility of an oil war, it would seem that the "S" in "SUV" doesn't stand for "sensible."

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Profits and pollution

The auto industry would like us to believe that that \$40,000-plus SUVs are safe, ecological and economical modes of transportation.

The truth is that SUVs account for 60 percent of auto industry profits. In 1997, J.D. Power & Associates pointed out that while a Ford Expedition will hand over \$10,000 in profit, a Lincoln Navigator results in a whopping \$20,000 profit.

These profits fuel the madness of failing to reveal the darker truths of these vehicles.

SUVs spew out 30 percent more carbon monoxide and 75 percent more nitrous oxide into the air than passenger cars. They do not have the same emission controls that cars do. All this equals 240 million tons per year of air pollution.

Cars must operate at 27.5 miles per gallon, while SUVs are only required to achieve 20.7 mpg. A quick trip to any dealership will reveal to you that most average only 12 to 16 mpg.

"So what?" you may say.

The EPA estimates that every year, 59 percent of the oil we use is imported from the Middle East. This means that we pump trillions of dollars every year to the very countries we wish to be independent from.

If we improved the gas mileage of all autos by just 3 mpg, we would no longer need oil from Iraq and Kuwait.

We Americans do have the right to purchase what we want. But in the words of JFK, "Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country."

Drive a vehicle that is safe for all and keeps our country clean and independent.

KAREN BREWER

Waterford

