



# Asthma

## Breathe Easier, with Osteopathy and Good Nutrition by Tamara McReynolds, D.O.

Breathing. For most of us, we do it effortlessly and without a second thought. For those with asthma, however, the term “breath of life” takes on a very literal meaning.

Asthma is a common condition, affecting both children and adults. Symptoms vary and range from mild to severe. Some people just cough a lot, while others have audible wheezing and obvious difficulty breathing. What’s scary is that asthma can appear and disappear without warning. If an attack is severe enough, it can kill.

### ***Asthma and Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT)***

Medication available to treat asthma is directed at opening the lung airways and decreasing inflammation and mucous production in the lungs. While pharmaceutical treatments have significantly improved the symptoms of asthma and the inflammation associated with wheezing, they don’t address the underlying disturbances in the body. Here are some basic problems seen in asthmatics and how osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) can help:

- **Difficulty taking full breaths.** Have you ever tried to take a deep breath with your rib cage locked? It’s very difficult. OMT is used to free up a tight chest, ribcage and diaphragm to make breathing easier and more efficient.
- **Nervous system out of balance** (parasympathetic predominance). In the lungs, stimulation of the parasympathetic nerves makes the lung tubes (bronchioles) contract and cause wheezing. An overactive parasympathetic nervous system is one reason why stimuli such as smoke, viruses and even sudden weather changes trigger wheezing in asthmatics. Precise osteopathic manipulation techniques are used to balance the nervous system.
- **Decreased immune function.** Asthmatics often suffer from lowered immune function due to the stress of asthma or chronic steroid use. Osteopathic lymphatic techniques enhance immune system function by clearing toxins and excess fluid associated with infections and inflammation.
- **Trauma to the tailbone.** Surprisingly, asthma is sometimes triggered by a hard fall on the tailbone, which causes it to be stuck, adversely affecting the “primary respiratory mechanism.” Using osteopathic cranial-sacral techniques, the sacrum (tailbone) is released, movement is re-established, and balance is restored.

### ***Nutrition and Asthma***

Proper nutrition is one of the best weapons in the prevention of asthmatic episodes. Here are some things you can do to help control your asthma symptoms:

- **Increase intake of organic fruits and vegetables.** They’re rich in antioxidants that have been shown to be low in patients with chronic lung problems, such as asthma.
- **Increase omega-3 fatty acids,** such as flax seed and walnuts.
- **Eliminate potential allergens,** including any food intolerances, sulfites (especially dried fruits), or food additives (aspartame, benzoates, and yellow dye #5).
- **Eliminate foods that promote inflammation,** such as polyunsaturated vegetable oils, margarine, vegetable shortening, and all foods with trans-fatty acids (like fried food).
- **Eliminate mucous forming foods,** especially milk and other dairy products.
- **Always drink plenty of water** to keep your respiratory tract secretions more fluid.



## ***Asthma Triggers***

Asthmatic attacks are commonly triggered by smoke, high pollen counts, vacuuming, dust and dust mites, animal hairs, and mold growth. Reduce exposure by using a hepa filter on all filtering machines, keeping your windows closed from 5 AM to 10 AM during high pollen count periods, and vacuuming with a sealed system with a hepa filter attached. Routine cleaning and dusting of bedding reduces buildup and the invitation for an airborne substance to trigger an asthmatic episode. Other triggers may be frequent viral infections, sinusitis, gastroesophageal reflux, medication sensitivity (aspirin, sulfites), exercise, and emotional anxiety.

Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment is an excellent complement in the treatment and management of asthma. Coupled with a strong nutritional and environmental program, amazing transformations in health can occur – many are able to decrease their medication requirements and frequency of attacks, while others are able to eliminate the need for medication completely.

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