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AIRWAY REMODELING by Douglas Homnick MD, MPH

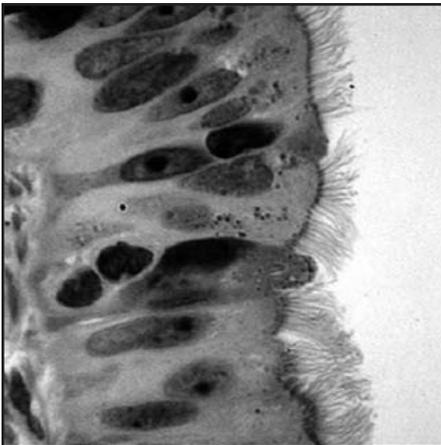
Our understanding of the possible long term effects of poorly controlled asthma is changing.

It has long been known that tightened airway muscles, inflamed (swollen) airway linings, and too much mucus cause asthma symptoms like coughing and wheezing. Asthma medications almost always reverse this process, making the airway muscles relax, swelling fade away, and mucus glands make less mucus.

However, for a small number of people with asthma, airway swelling over long periods of time can cause changes in the lungs that may lead to a loss of airway function. These changes can include thickened airway membranes, larger airway muscles and mucus glands, and growth of scar tissue under the airway lining, making the airways narrow, and causing asthma symptoms. This condition is called airway remodeling.

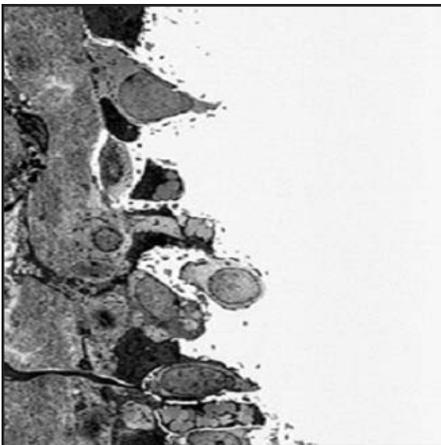
Scientists still question the actual definition of airway remodeling and how it affects asthma patients. Researchers are working to find the link between asthma severity and airway remodeling. They are also trying to see if remodeling is to blame for the lungs exaggerated response to asthma triggers and lower lung function.

There has been more research over the past few years investigating asthma and airway remodeling, but there are still more questions than there are answers. Currently, there is controversy within the research literature over who is at risk, and whether or not current asthma treatments are able to reverse remodeling. There is some evidence, however, that inhaled corticosteroids may help those who have remodeled airways.



Above, a magnified view of a normal airway lining.

Below, a remodeled airway lining.



More research is needed to find out how early the remodeling process begins, how it develops over time, and if treatment can prevent remodeling or at least make symptoms less severe.

In the meantime, it is helpful for patients with asthma to work with their doctor to get an early diagnosis, make an asthma action plan, and begin taking inhaled corticosteroids if needed. If a patient has been prescribed a long-term controller medication that keeps the airways from becoming swollen, it is important that they take it regularly, even when they are breathing well. By taking medication and following their asthma action plan, people with asthma can help prevent airway remodeling. 

Douglas Homnick is Director of the Pediatric Pulmonary Division, Cystic Fibrosis Center and Asthma Clinic at MSU, Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies. He is also a past chair of the Kalamazoo Area Asthma Coalition.

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 During the fall months, the average rate of asthma hospitalization among Michigan children under 18 years is 8.2 per 10,000 population.

 During the fall months, the average rate of asthma hospitalization among Michigan adults 18 years or older is 3.4 per 10,000 population.

Source: Michigan Inpatient Database (2001-2003), Bureau of Epidemiology, Michigan Department of Community Health

ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



School Asthma Awareness Campaign

Asthma is the most common chronic disease among school-aged children in the United States. Estimates from state surveys show that about 1 in every 15 children in school has asthma. In urban areas of Michigan, estimates suggests that one in five children have asthma. Worst yet, a survey conducted by the Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM) suggest that many school workers routinely underestimate the disease.

AIM has been working hard to get the word out that 'Asthma is more serious than you think' and has developed asthma awareness kits for school employees in Michigan. The new school kits are targeted specifically to administrative assistants, custodians, principals and teachers. Most importantly, they are short and respect the time and resources of school workers.

"The asthma coalitions are very excited about this project," said Erin Salvagione, RN, of the Southwest Michigan Asthma Coalition. "We have worked closely with AIM during the kit's development and we are happy to answer questions and provide in-services to local schools."

And local schools are interested. Early feedback from schools across the state has shown that the kits are doing their jobs: getting schools interested in learning more about asthma.

If you would like more information about an asthma coalition or the school asthma awareness campaign, please visit our website (www.GetAsthmaHelp.org).

No Internet access? Please call 1-866-EZ-LUNGS (1-866-395-8647) for assistance.



Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:
MI Asthma Communication Network
c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org

FALL ASTHMA TIPS: Active in the Fall

Crisp air, colorful leaves, and sports fans cheering on their favorite football teams all mean one thing: it's fall! But for some people, it also means coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

There should be no reason for your asthma to keep you on the sidelines this season. Just remember these tips to keep you in the game:



1) Always carry your quick-relief (rescue) inhaler with you. With weather changes, high pollen counts, and afternoon games of flag football, you never know when you are going to need it!

2) People with asthma can be as active as they want to be. Just remember to take your asthma medicine as your doctor told you! If you still have asthma symptoms, see your doctor.

Happy Football Season! 

ASTHMA ADVOCACY UPDATE

In September, 2005, Governor Jennifer Granholm signed SB 335 into law. Now known as Public Act 120 (2005), the law will permit minor children attending Michigan camps to self-carry and self-administer their asthma inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors at Michigan camps (including camp transportation, or at any activity, event or program sponsored by the camp) when certain conditions are met.

Go to www.michiganlegislature.org and enter 335 under "Legislative Bill Search" for more information and to view the new law. 

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

October

- 18 **Play Hard, Breathe Easy: Managing Exercise-Induced Asthma**
Prince Conference Center at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
For more info: 616-732-8984
- 23 **Asthma and Allergy Foundation Michigan Chapter Annual Affair**
Somerset Inn, Troy, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. For more info: 248-557-8050
- 26 **Third Annual Asthma Symposium: Barriers to Asthma Care**
Hagerty Center-Great Lakes Maritime Academy, Traverse City, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more info: 231-935-6736

November

- 2 **Catch Your Breath: Women and Lung Health Conference and Luncheon**
Marriot, Troy, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more info: 248-784-2017
- 4 **Asthma Information Review (AIR) Course**
UA Great Lakes Regional Training Center, Ann Arbor, 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more info: (734) 677-MSRC

December

- 3- **AARC Annual Conference**
- 6 **Henry B Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, TX.** For more info:
http://www.aarc.org/education/meetings/congress_05/advance_program/

Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org or call 866-395-8647 for more information about asthma events & trainings in your area.