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AAFA-TX thanks those who made donations in memory of and in tribute to Kareem Bacchus of Plano. These gifts will help us serve the community with free programs and services. Thank you. For more information, contact AAFA-TX

**YES, THERE'S ANOTHER REASON TO EAT HEALTHY: IT MIGHT IMPROVE YOUR ALLERGIES & ASTHMA**

\* Children and adults with allergies or asthma are usually aware of their allergens or triggers and know eliminating these allergens from their environment plus following the right medication plan will usually reduce their allergy and asthma symptoms and the number of asthma flare-ups. But there **might be another way to also help reduce allergy and asthma symptoms many patients overlook: eat a healthy diet of the right foods.**

\* According to some physicians, including Dr. Andrew Weil, MD, director of the Program in Integrative Medicine and a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Arizona, Tucson, eating a nutritious diet helps alleviate or perhaps even prevents allergy and asthma symptoms.

\* **Why?** There are several reasons: *eating certain foods controls the underlying causes for inflammation of the air passages*; eating certain healthy foods can *reduce or dilate the airway passages*; these foods may *thin the mucus* in the lungs; a healthy diet consisting of the right foods may prevent food-allergy reactions that can trigger asthma flare-ups; obesity affects asthma and the best way to reduce weight is to eat healthy foods, eat less and exercise more.

\* **Overweight/obese children and adolescents have more severe asthma** than asthma patients who have a normal BMI. (Scientifically, obesity is determined by our BMI – Body Mass Index).

\* Statistics on obesity are shocking. In 2002, **10 million or 63% of adult Texans were overweight or obese** compared to the national rate of 33%. The Texas Department of Health states **33% of Texas children (6-11) and adolescents (12-19) are overweight or obese** compared with the national average of 15.5%. These numbers nationwide have doubled over the past 25 years and they're still growing, no pun intended.

\* Health officials know unless this trend changes, at least half of these overweight/obese children will become obese adults with serious, deadly health complications; but the health implications are NOW not later. Overweight children have adult health issues: diabetes, high blood pressure, other heart diseases plus more severe childhood asthma.

\* **What does eating healthy mean?** Simply put, it means **avoiding empty-calorie foods**: sugar-loaded soft drinks, cookies, pies, cakes, ice cream, fast-foods loaded with bad fats (fats solid at room temperature) plus an excess of meat protein. Healthy eating means *eating more fruits, veggies, whole grains, fish, dairy, beans, lentils and soy proteins*.

\* Following a healthy diet only to help reduce allergy and asthma symptoms is a controversial idea, yet some nutritionists and physicians believe certain foods can act as natural allergy relievers. **What are these foods?**

\* **Good fats:** Omega-3 Essential fatty acids are natural anti-inflammatory agents. Not found naturally in our body, we must eat foods containing this nutrient: flaxseed and flaxseed oil, walnut oil, salmon, haddock, cod fish, sardines, mackerel and canola oil are all loaded with these good fats.

\* **Fruit juices:** Rich in antioxidants which clear inflammation from the body, any & all fruit juices are good as long as they are **pure** and not primarily water with 10% juice or worse, 10% added corn syrup! Read labels carefully.

\* **High-fiber foods:** Besides working in tandem with good fats and antioxidants, high-fiber foods are good for the gut, which boosts our immune system. **Much of our immune system resides in our intestinal tract** and a healthy colon is important to our over-all health. High fiber foods like whole grains, nuts, seeds, wheat germ, vegetables and brown rice all help to keep our colons healthy and acting the way they should partly because they produce the good digestive 'bugs' or bacteria, Lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidobacteria. When these good bacteria are balanced in our system, our gut stays healthy, digests food properly and eliminates bad bacteria like salmonella.

\* **Yogurt:** If you don't have a milk allergy, eating large quantities of "live active culture" yogurt daily restores the balance between good and bad bacteria in the gut. Finnish scientists conducted a study and discovered children given probiotic culture supplements improved their severe eczema. But not all yogurts are alike: frozen yogurt and other yogurts made with gelatin and added sugar can even aggravate allergies due to the sugar. Read labels: look for active live cultures.

\* There are some **"super foods" which should be part of our normal healthy diet including** apples; canola oil, soybean, flaxseed and olive oil; walnuts and almonds; wheat germ; cold water fish like salmon, sardines, tuna, lake trout, mackerel; foods rich in magnesium – spinach, navy beans, pinto beans, sunflower seeds, tofu, cashews, black-eyed peas, artichokes; spices like ginger and turmeric (which reduce inflammation); zinc-rich food such as plain yogurt, tofu, lean ground beef, lean ham, oysters, crab, dark meat turkey & chicken (asthma patients are zinc-deficient). Eating these foods will have a positive impact on allergies and asthma and generally improve our health.

\* As always, if you have asthma and especially food allergy, **consult your physician before changing your diet.** To calculate Body Mass Index, (BMI) check out: <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>

**Upcoming Free AAFA-TX Programs: 1) Sat. Oct. 13,** "Diagnosing & Managing Asthma: Successful Asthma Control for Kids & Adults" Wm. Lumry, MD, Robert Rogers, MD, Eric Schmitt, MD, William Neaville, MD faculty, Richard Herrscher, MD Moderator. Rebecca Gruchalla, MD, PhD, Program Director. Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas. A category 1, CME seminar worth 4 credits for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and nurses. **For details, contact AAFA-TX 2) Sat. Oct. 13 – "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers"** Kids R Kids, Katy, TX, Sarah Nelson, instructor. **3) Sat. Nov. 3,** "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers" Grandma's House Childcare Ctr. Houston, Sarah Nelson, instructor. **4) Fri. Nov. 9, 8:00-11:00 am, "Asthma Management & Education"** a CE program for nurses worth 3 contact hrs, TX State School Nurse Org. Conference, Houston, TX. Pre-registration required with the TSNO. **For information, contact AAFA-TX.**

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