


Lung-loving strategies for healthy breathing

written by Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum | December 3, 2013

Optimizing Lung Health

Your lungs flank your heart like two guardians, delivering life-giving oxygen to your cells and expelling carbon dioxide, the waste product of energy production.

The journey of inhaled air starts in the nose or mouth. From there, it flows into the windpipe and then enters the tubes of the bronchi – the muscular, branching structures in the lungs. Those branches narrow into hollow twigs called bronchioles.

 Each bronchiole ends in an alveoli, a two-way, microscopic air sac that absorbs oxygen and sends it into the bloodstream, and picks up carbon dioxide for disposal.

Ahh ... a breath of fresh air! Or maybe it's aaah-choo. Because our respiratory system doesn't always work like it's supposed to. We can get upper respiratory infections, like colds, flu or pneumonia. The bronchi can become inflamed, clogged with mucus and go into spasm, triggering asthma.

Asthma afflicts an estimated 27 million American adults and children, resulting in 500,000 yearly hospitalizations and 4,000 deaths from severe asthma attacks. And the problem is getting steadily worse. Over the last 25 years, the number of people with asthma has quadrupled and the numbers of deaths from asthma has doubled.

Another respiratory problem is chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD), which is usually caused by smoking. It has two main forms:

1. Emphysema, in which the walls of the alveoli are injured and you're constantly short of breath.
2. Chronic bronchitis, in which you're mucus-ridden, cough constantly, and breathe with difficulty.

And there are many other acute and chronic problems that can bedevil the lungs, like acute bronchitis (a bacterial infection of the bronchi, usually occurring after a cold), or worse yet lung cancer.

Fortunately, there are easy, natural ways to optimize lung function and help you breathe easier. Ways to thwart chronic respiratory infections, decrease inflammation, keep excess mucus in check, and relax the airways.

In this article, I discuss a dozen, simple, lung-loving strategies, each of which is like a breath of fresh air.

Optimizing Lung Function

It's important to know which area of lung function is associated with which specific lung health condition, and then take measures to optimize the functionality of that specific area.

For those with asthma:

✘ Asthma represents a mix of spasm of the muscular airways combined with inflammation and increased mucus production. Allergies can aggravate both of these. Because of this, when optimizing lung health, it is especially important to focus on areas that calm muscles that are in spasm while balancing immune function. Things that help these include (the 1st two are most important):

1. **Take boswellia (1,000 mg daily).** This herb helps balance the immune system. BosCur 1 cap 1-2 times a day can be especially helpful, as it has only the helpful components of the boswellia and has a form of curcumin which is highly absorbed. Both of these are very powerful immune balancers.
2. **Optimize vitamins and minerals.** Many nutrients can optimize the health of your airways. They include vitamins B6 and B12, vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin E and beta-carotene, along with the minerals magnesium, selenium and molybdenum – all of which you can find in the Energy Revitalization System vitamin powder. Instead of writing 3,000 words on why each of these can help and having you take 6-8 tablets a day, let's keep it simple. Take the one drink a day of the vitamin powder for overall health.
3. **Support Adrenal Function.** Just as prednisone (a synthetic cortisol steroid) helps asthma (with a slew of side effects), supporting your own natural adrenal cortisol production can help your breathing – but safely! A mix of licorice, vitamin B5, vitamin C, and adrenal glandulars will help support adrenal function and can be found in combination in Adrenal Stress End.
4. **Oil your alveoli.** The omega-3 fatty acids in fish can cool down an overactive immune system and help the airways in your lungs stay relaxed. Tuna, salmon, sardines and other fatty fish are good sources of omega-3s. For a lung-optimizing fish oil supplement, I recommend Vectomega, which has a bioidentical structure identical to that found in salmon (it surprised me to realize that most fish oils are not bioidentical), dramatically increasing absorption. 1-2 tablets a day are all you need, instead of 8-16 of most fish oil capsules.
5. **Take lycopene (30-45 mg daily).** This powerful antioxidant from tomatoes is most important for those with exercise-induced asthma. In one placebo-controlled study, it was significantly protective after one week's use in 55% of people with exercise-induced asthma. Why not just eat tomatoes? You'd have to eat a pound a day to get an optimal dose! Vitamin C 500 mg a day also helps exercise-induced asthma.
6. **Settle your allergies.** Have asthma triggered by allergies? These tips can help:

- **Consider NAET.** A special acupuncture technique called NAET can make your lungs less sensitive to possible negative influences, like foods that injure your immune system. To find a practitioner, visit the NAET website. NAET knocked out my lifelong hay fever in one 20 minute treatment!
- **Add an electrostatic air cleaner to your furnace.** As I wrote in my book *Real Cause, Real Cure* (Rodale, 2012), this device pulls allergens out of the air, a big help if your lungs aren't functioning optimally. Doing this in our home knocked out my daughter's asthma almost overnight. Your heating and cooling service company can guide you in picking and installing a unit, which costs about \$800. Smart tip: Be sure the air cleaner filters can fit in your dishwasher, and wash them the first of each month. If you can't install an in-furnace air filter, an alternative is a HEPA air filter in your bedroom. It's not as thorough, but it's extremely helpful.
- **Take measures in your home to decrease allergen load.** This can include treating for dust mites (any allergist can guide you on this) while also considering special plastic wraps that go around the mattresses to collect the dust.

For people with emphysema and chronic bronchitis:

✘ Emphysema represents severe lung damage, most often from smoking, toxic chemical/substance exposures, or chronic bronchitis. It can cause significant shortness of breath, wheezing, and limitations in activity. In the past, emphysema was felt to represent almost entirely irreversible lung damage and chronic bronchitis was the step before emphysema. Fortunately, there does appear to be a significant reversible component to both these conditions, and at these levels of lung damage even small increases in lung function can translate into large increases in your being able to function. This means aggressively going after the inflammation and airways spasm as discussed above for asthma (especially optimizing lung function using treatments 1 to 3 above).

Interestingly, optimizing the levels of a key antioxidant called glutathione has been especially helpful.

The Energy Revitalization System vitamin powder can be helpful in maintaining lung health overall, including by increasing glutathione levels. In addition:

1. **Take NAC (N-acetylcysteine).** This amino acid further boosts the level of glutathione, and also helps loosen up the mucus that can restrict easy breathing. Take 650 mg, 1-2x daily.
2. **Inhaled glutathione using a nebulizer.** This needs to be prescribed by your physician, and unless you go to a holistic physician they are likely to simply give you a blank stare when you ask about it. For information on using it, as well as adding colloidal silver to the nebulizer if you have yellow mucus suggesting possible infections, see this forum post at Cure Zone.

For recurrent respiratory infections:

Once again, the Energy Revitalization System multivitamin powder can help optimize immune function. The zinc in the multivitamin is especially important for immune function. In addition:

1. **Beat back those bugs.** Your lungs can't perform optimally if they're fighting off bacteria and viruses. Winter's around the corner, so it's good to take simple but effective measures to protect yourself. Begin with a multivitamin and getting 8 hours sleep a night to optimize immune function. In addition, add ProBoost, a supplement that promotes healthy immune function by mimicking the hormone made by the immune-supporting thymus gland. *This is a good supplement for everyone to have in the medicine cabinet.*
2. **Optimize your adrenals, too.** One of the common symptoms of inadequate adrenal function is recurrent sore throats and upper respiratory infections. To support healthy adrenals, I recommend taking Adrenal Stress End from Enzymatic Therapy. This supplement delivers adrenal-optimizing nutrients and herbs like vitamin C, B6, pantothenate and licorice extract. Take 1 capsule, first thing in the morning. Most people find that it also smooths out their moods and their sugar cravings while helping to balance energy.
3. **Take a walk outdoors.** Getting outside exposes you to the sun, which helps your body produce immune-balancing vitamin D. (Remember my mantra – Avoid sunburn, not sunshine.) Regular exercise also strengthens the muscles of your chest wall, helping you breathe. Dress warmly if you have fibromyalgia and are going out in the cold weather, preferably using wool long underwear, as this can keep your muscles from going into spasm. Interestingly, a study using woolen long underwear and woolen sheets and pillowcases in people with fibromyalgia during the wintertime resulted in dramatic decreases in pain.

Short of Breath? One Final Thought...

Learn to relax. Are you sometimes short of breath? By practicing yoga, relaxation techniques or deep breathing exercises, your sense of breathlessness will go down dramatically. Important: for the deepest breath, breathe from your belly rather than your chest. Put one hand gently over your belly – if it's rising and falling as you breathe, you're breathing from belly.