

Asthma



Your chiropractor can offer advice on diet, strategies to minimize exposure to harmful allergens and simple, safe ways to optimise your child's immune function.

Asthma is on the increase. More children in the developed world are afflicted by it than ever before.

For some children the effects of asthma can be serious with wheezing, uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing and even trips to hospital emergency rooms. While others live with mild effects and medicate them selves.

For parents and care-givers, knowing the correct treatment for a child with asthma can be confusing, not to mention the expense. Chiropractors who treat children are frequently asked by concerned parents about the role chiropractic has to play in the treatment of asthma.

Chiropractic has a distinct role to play in the management of a child with asthma, but like other treatments available, chiropractic alone does not hold all the answers. To appreciate the role of chiropractic in asthma, the known causes or 'triggers' of an attack need to be understood.

Children with asthma have very sensitive airways (the tiny branches air passes through into the lungs). These tubes can become inflamed causing them to narrow, making it difficult to inhale and exhale easily. This can result in shortness of breath, wheezing and a persistent cough, which is more apparent with exercise and at night.

Various things can set off an asthma attack. **Viral infection** of the respiratory tract is a common trigger. Infection can occur at any time, but is much more frequent during winter and spring in countries which have distinct seasons.

Passive smoke inhaled by children living with parents who smoke has been linked to an increased likelihood of the children developing asthma.

Emotional and physical **stress** can also set off asthma attacks. Another common cause is house **dust mites**, often found in bedding, carpets and soft toys. Dust mites can cause an allergic reaction, which in some people can develop into an asthmatic reaction.

Food allergies are another possible trigger. Each person is different but some common foods known to trigger attacks include nuts, seafood, eggs and some preservatives.

The medical approach to asthma treatment is to provide the child with medication that reduces inflammation in the respiratory tract and keeps the bronchus as open as possible.

Many of the causes of asthma can be greatly assisted, drug free, through chiropractic care. Chiropractic contributes to asthma management most effectively in cases triggered by allergies. In these cases the lining of the airways can become highly sensitive. This is referred to as 'non-specific bronchial hyper-reactivity'. When the reactivity of the bronchus is high, it takes very little exposure to the offending allergic substance to trigger an attack. Research performed in Europe has shown that chiropractic care can reduce the degree of sensitivity of the bronchial lining by up to 40%.