

Focus on Health

A publication on lung health from
BlueHealth Advantage

SPRING 2017

Healthy Foods to Help with Springtime Allergies

Are you one of the millions of Americans who deal with spring allergies? Symptoms occur when an allergen (such as pollen) enters the body and the immune system produces inflammatory substances—including histamines. Luckily, studies show that the following foods may help to ease pesky springtime allergy symptoms.

The food: APPLES

Apples contain kellin, a compound that works to keep airways open. Kellin is also part of a group of nutrients called flavonoids. These antioxidants prevent your body from pumping out histamines that cause those irritating allergy symptoms.



How to add more to your diet:

Try applesauce and toss in raisins or cranberries. Or slice up apples to dip in peanut butter.



The food: BROCCOLI

Broccoli contains an anti-inflammatory compound called sulforaphane that has been shown to reduce allergic reactions to harmful air particles.

How to add more to your diet: This veggie is a great addition to any stir-fry, soup, pasta dish or omelet.

The foods: FISH, NUTS AND OLIVE OIL

These foods are staples of the Mediterranean diet, which has been linked to reduced allergy and asthma symptoms and better asthma control. Experts suspect the vitamin C, vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids this diet contains fight inflammation and cell damage in the lungs.



How to add more to your diet:

Bake fish at a high heat and add herbs, spices and a drizzle of lemon juice. Add nuts to salads and stir-fries, stir them into yogurt or add nut butter to smoothies. Use olive oil for grilling, roasting or sautéing, or drizzle it over toasted bread and pasta dishes.



The food: YOGURT

Yogurt contains probiotics—healthy bacteria that can alter the way your

immune system responds to allergens. Studies show that probiotics may also help to reduce allergy symptoms.

How to add more to your diet: Top baked potatoes and fruit salad with low-fat yogurt or substitute plain yogurt for sour cream in recipes. Aged cheese and kefir also contain live cultures. So do nondairy foods such as miso, sauerkraut and kimchi.



eat it up

For more nutrition tips, visit
livewellnebraska.com/nutrition.

Get Better, More Affordable COPD Care

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 15 million Americans have been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you are one of them, you can breathe easier knowing that treatment is available to help manage the condition.

Still, accessing the right medications can be challenging. Prescription medication for COPD can be costly. Even if it's covered by health insurance, patients may be required to pay considerable out-of-pocket costs. As a result, only half of COPD medicines are taken as prescribed, according to a research review published in the journal *Clinical Therapeutics*. To save money, many patients skip days, don't take their full dosage or don't refill prescriptions.

Don't skimp on your health. These tactics can help you get excellent COPD care and safely cut costs:

- **Switch medications.** If your copayments are a problem, ask your doctor about how to get your medication at a reduced

cost. Is there a less expensive drug that might work just as well, such as a generic medication?

- **Get Medicare Part D coverage.** If you're 65 or older, consider enrolling in Medicare Part D, which features low-cost prescription coverage. If your copayment is still too high, find out if your state offers a pharmaceutical assistance program at www.medicare.gov. Or call the manufacturer's customer service line to see whether it offers an assistance program.
- **Try a clinical trial.** Enrolling in a clinical trial helps test whether a new treatment is likely to work. You may also receive the current standard of care free or at a reduced cost. Visit www.clinicaltrials.gov for information about COPD clinical trials.

don't skip a script

To find a pharmacy or learn about mail order service, visit nebraskablue.com/rxtools.

OUT OF OFFICE

Controlling Asthma Triggers at Work

Many people have asthma that is triggered by irritants or allergens in the workplace. This is called occupational asthma. Triggers in the workplace might include irritants such as fumes, gases, smoke, chemicals and metals, or allergens such as animal dander, dust or mold.

If you are having asthma symptoms at work, you may want to talk with your manager. You can talk about the possibility of changing work processes to lessen your exposure to irritants. You may also try to make changes to your schedule to lessen your exposure. For example, you might work in a different part of the facility or in another building. Or you might work different hours when fewer irritants are present.

For more information that can help, visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website at www.osha.gov.

The Asthma-Osteoporosis Connection

If you have asthma, you probably spend a lot of time thinking about your lung health. But another part of your body might need some added attention: your bones.

Recent research suggests a link between bone mineral density (BMD) and asthma. The connection may have something to do with vitamin D. The nutrient helps the body absorb calcium, which in turn builds bone. Without enough vitamin D, bones can weaken. Past research shows that those with asthma seem prone to a vitamin D deficiency. They may even suffer worse asthma symptoms because of it.

Take Care with Corticosteroids

If you have asthma, you may already know about the risks of taking corticosteroids. These drugs hinder the body's ability to form new bone. Inhaled versions are generally safer than a pill. But you should still take the lowest effective dose possible. Higher doses can lead to osteoporosis. Work with your health care provider to figure out the best choice for you.

Preventing Bone Loss

You can also prevent bone loss and osteoporosis by doing the following:

- **Eat more foods rich in calcium and vitamin D**, or take supplements if needed.
- **Take part in weight-bearing exercise**, such as dancing, walking and running. If physical activity triggers your asthma, talk with your health care provider about strategies that may allow you to exercise.
- **Don't smoke or drink.** Smoking can deplete bone. Alcohol can lead to poor nutrition and raise your risk for falling.
- **Talk with your health care provider** about having your BMD tested regularly. He or she may recommend screening if you are older than age 65 or if you take a corticosteroid.

bone up on preventive care

Ask your doctor about bone density and other preventive screenings. Find a provider at nebraskablue.com/find-a-doctor.

More Than a Breathing Problem

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you know it can sometimes be a struggle to breathe. COPD attacks the airways and lungs. It can cause shortness of breath, wheezing, a chronic cough and chest tightness. These symptoms can affect how well you sleep. That, in turn, can affect your mental well-being.

In fact, a recent study published in the *Journal of Psychiatric Medicine* found a connection between COPD and insomnia, and between insomnia and depression, anxiety and other mental health problems. And insomnia isn't the only sleep disorder plaguing people with COPD. For instance, one-third of COPD sufferers may have restless legs syndrome, which causes tingling or a constant urge to move the legs, especially at night.

Dealing with these problems can be a major obstacle for those trying to manage their COPD symptoms. It's important to know that help is available for both sleep disorders and mental health problems. If you are experiencing them, talk with your doctor.



How to Reach Us

When it comes to managing your health, you're never alone. BlueHealth Advantage is your partner on the path to wellness.

Call: 877-348-4329

Email: wellness@nebraskablue.com

BlueHealthAdvantageNE.com

Scan here
to visit the
site now!



take a look inside!

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Breathe
easy at work.
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healthy recipe! Simple Fish Tacos

Ingredients

- ½ cup nonfat sour cream
- ¼ cup fat-free mayonnaise
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ package low-sodium taco seasoning, divided
- 1 lb. cod or whitefish fillets, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 cups shredded red and green cabbage
- 2 cups diced tomato
- 12 6-inch warmed corn tortillas
- Taco sauce
- Lime wedges

Directions

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise, cilantro and 2 tablespoons taco seasoning. In a medium bowl, combine fish, oil, lemon juice and remaining taco seasoning; pour into large skillet. Cook, stirring constantly, over medium-high heat for four to five minutes, or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Fill tortillas with fish mixture. Top with cabbage, tomato, sour cream mixture and taco sauce; serve with lime wedges.

Makes six servings. Each serving provides about 270 calories, 7 g fat, 35 mg cholesterol and 38 g carbohydrates.

