

New Breathing Exercises Help Manage Asthma

A presentation that demonstrates breathing exercises designed to help reduce the use of asthma inhalers is today available to the general public for free from the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Asthma and Airways website.

The 40 minute production is in response to a research paper on the management of asthma through the use of breathing exercises, conducted by researchers and doctors at Sydney's Woolcock Institute of Medical Research and Melbourne's Alfred Hospital, which was published in the August 2006¹ edition of Thorax.

The results of this study showed that asthmatics who undertook regular breathing exercises reduced their preventer medication levels by up to half and reliever use by up to 86%.

The presentation demonstrates the breathing exercise techniques used in the study and features Professor Christine Jenkins, Head of Asthma Research at the Woolcock Institute and Project Leader of the research study.

In the presentation, she outlines our current understanding of asthma, and the potential role of breathing techniques in helping to control asthma symptoms. She puts this into the context of good asthma management and review. Two different groups of breathing techniques are demonstrated. One set is for practicing daily and one set is for relief of asthma symptoms.

Professor Christine Jenkins, Head of Asthma Research at the Woolcock Institute said, "The research study was designed to measure the effect of two very different exercise regimes on a person's asthma symptoms, lung function, use of medication and quality of life".

"However it found no evidence to favour one breathing technique over the other. Instead, both groups of exercises were associated with a dramatic reduction in reliever use. Using either type of exercise was effective in markedly reducing the use of reliever medication. A reduction in inhaled corticosteroid (ICS) dose was also achieved, probably resulting from trial participation and clinical care in the study."

According to Professor Jenkins the results of regularly undertaking the exercises could be particularly beneficial to the management of patients with mild asthma symptoms, who use a reliever frequently,

"Our study suggests that breathing exercises as a first-line symptom treatment can help to reinforce the message of relaxation and self-efficacy and provide a deferral strategy for beta-agonist use.

"The presentation advises a person to do the exercises twice a day and also whenever they experience asthma symptoms," she said.

"We hope that people with asthma will avail themselves of the information, presented in this easily understood format, and see it as a complementary approach to their asthma management."

The presentation can be viewed at the Asthma CRC's website www.asthmacrc.org.au. For further information the general public can call (02) 9036 3125.

1. C A Slader, H K Reddel, L M Spencer, E G Belousova, C L Armour, S Z Bosnic-Anticevich, F C K Thien, and C R Jenkins
Double blind randomised controlled trial of two different breathing techniques in the management of asthma. Thorax, Aug 2006; 61: 651 - 656.