



## OPTIONS CENTER NUTRITION TOPIC



### Asthma: A Link to Junk Food

Scientists believe junk food may be partly responsible for an increase in rates of childhood asthma in developed countries. Researchers examined communities in Saudi Arabia where there are striking differences in lifestyle and rates of allergies across the country. They compared more than 100 children with the symptoms of asthma with 200 non-asthmatic children.

They found that children who had the lowest intakes of vegetables and milk, vitamin E, and certain minerals were at significantly greater risk of asthma-type symptoms. However, other factors thought to increase risk, such as large family size, poverty, and parental smoking, did not appear to be important.

The researchers also found that the children who were most at risk lived in urban areas such as the westernized city Jeddah. It is in these areas where diets are least nutritious and where they most closely resemble the junk food-laden fare commonly eaten by children in developed countries.

In contrast, rural children were less likely to be asthmatic. Their traditional Arabic Saudi diet is based on cows' and goats' milk, rice, vegetables, lamb, chicken, dates and local fruits and contains none of the processed and frozen foods increasingly found in city supermarkets.



The researchers, led by Professor Anthony Seaton from the University of Aberdeen, said, "This study suggests that dietary factors during childhood are an important influence in determining the expression of wheezy illness."

## High United Kingdom Rates

One in seven children in the United Kingdom (UK) suffers from asthma. The number of children under five who develop asthma and wheezing has almost doubled in less than a decade.

Dr. Martyn Partridge, chairman of the British Thoracic Society, said, "This study adds to the evidence that a diet rich in fruit and vegetables can help to prevent the world's children from developing asthma and wheezy diseases."

"Here in the UK, the government has recognized this and committed to providing children with free fruit in school.

"We would urge all health care professionals to help parents understand that eating a balanced diet can have a positive effect on the lungs as well as the heart."

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help to prevent the world's children from developing asthma and wheezy diseases.

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