

# ALL STUFFED UP and Nowhere to Blow

## *The Role of Allergies in Airway and Sleep Dysfunction*



### PART TWO:

According to the CDC, we've experienced a 50% increase in food allergies between 1997 and 2011. Now one in every 20 kids has a food allergy. Beyond a stuffy nose, a child with an allergic reaction visits the emergency department every three minutes in the U.S.

We must remind parents that genetics is *not* believed to play a significant role here because our genetic makeup certainly hasn't changed much in the 50 years, as we've witnessed this skyrocketing trend.

### How is This Happening?

Today it's a better-known concept that the increase in food and environmental allergies also has to do with a lack of exposure to early-life microbes. While we are born from a relatively sterile environment, we swiftly become a massive bug factory. It seems the more *assorted* our bug populations become, the healthier we are presumed to be. And vice versa!

Sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it? But it should come as no surprise because it is just as we observe in nature. Forests, lakes, oceans and other wildlife habitats flourish with a wide diversity of lifeforms. Whenever you see that lack of diversity, you witness firsthand a suffering habitat.

As such, there's a heap of good research pinning the big rise in allergies, asthma, autoimmune deficiencies, inflammatory bowel diseases, autism, diabetes, certain types of cancer and even obesity on our deficient microbiome.

The root causes (and solutions) of our modern *microbial inadequacy* are many: overuse of antibiotics, processed foods, a glut of C-sections, decreased connection to the outdoors and over-sanitization of our environment.

But that's not all. We're also staring at a huge decrease in agricultural diversity in our diets. Sadly, 75% of our food comes from only 12 plant species and five animal species.

### What Can We Do?

It's hard for physicians to keep up with the changing recommendations for allergy prevention and treatment. In 2000, the American Academy of Pediatrics agreed that we should delay the introduction of cow milk until age 1; eggs until age 2; and shellfish, fish, peanuts and tree nuts until age 3.

But in 2008 the pendulum began to swing the other way. It was determined that the current guidelines were ineffective – and maybe even contributing to the worsening crisis.

Hence, the new recommendations by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology are that allergenic foods should be introduced like other whole foods. Present them one at a time, gradually, in small quantities, starting at 4 to 6 months (soon after vegetables and meats), and ideally before they are 7 months old.

### Back to Airway ...

Do you see how all of this is connected? Through expanded learning, it's exciting to see our role in the ability to help kids identify food allergies/sensitivities and uncover new strategies that might aid their sleep disordered breathing.



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