

# Targeted breathing method shown to treat asthma better than drugs or supplements

While mainstream treatments try to "control" asthma by throwing bronchodilators and steroids at the symptoms, an alternative therapy developed by a Russian doctor has actually eliminated the cause of asthma in over 90 percent of patients. For the 17 million Americans suffering with asthma, this may finally provide them with true relief.

## **Nine out of 10 of us breathe incorrectly - and we may be sick because of it**

In the 1940's, Professor Konstantin Pavlovich Buteyko (byew-TAY-ko) of the then-Soviet Union observed that only 10 percent of all people breathe correctly and the asthma is just one of many health problems caused by improper breathing. Through his observation of hospitalized asthma patients, Dr. Buteyko concluded that the majority of asthma attacks are triggered by patients breathing too quickly.

Hyperventilation, or overbreathing, is the process of taking several breaths in the same period of time that a normal person would take one breath. Dr. Buteyko discovered that asthma sufferers take three to four breaths when they should be taking only one. And this process can start a cascade of events that eventually leads to asthma and other health problems.

## **Hyperventilation decreases the oxygen sent to your bloodstream**

The more breaths you take in a short period of time, the less oxygen is available to your bloodstream. Your lungs require a certain amount of time to process the air you inhale. Hyperventilation short-circuits this mechanism and deprives your body of the time it needs to process each breath. And for each extra breath you take, the amount of available oxygen drops that much more. It's a classic case of diminishing returns when the next breath follows too closely on the heels of the previous one.

In addition to reducing oxygen in the blood, hyperventilation also decreases your levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and may cause a deficiency of the gas. **A low level of CO<sub>2</sub> drops your body's pH level and creates an alkaline environment,<sup>A</sup>** which encourages viral growth and allergies.

Recurring infections and multiple allergies are common in asthma victims and often complicate treatment efforts.

CO<sub>2</sub> also plays an important role in dilating smooth muscles, including those in your lungs. This is believed to be one of the mechanisms that initiates bronchial spasms in asthma sufferers.

Even though too little CO<sub>2</sub> compromises blood oxygen levels, simply supplying CO<sub>2</sub> to asthma sufferers doesn't stop or prevent asthmatic attacks.<sup>1</sup> What Dr. Buteyko found was that you can increase levels of oxygen and CO<sub>2</sub> effectively prevent and stop asthma attacks by learning controlled breathing techniques.

## **Traditional asthma treatment increases drug use**

The claims made by Dr. Buteyko were especially interesting to officials of the Australian Association of Asthma Foundations, since surveys show that nine percent of Australian adults have asthma and up to 20 percent of Australian children suffer from it. As a result, researchers conducted a prospective, placebo-controlled, randomized, blind study at Brisbane's Mater Hospital to determine if the Buteyko method could decrease or shorten asthma attacks better than conventional methods.

Thirty-nine severe asthmatics ages 12 to 70 were placed into either a treatment group or a placebo group and received 90 minutes of training a day for seven days. While the treatment group was taught the Buteyko method of breathing, the control group received traditional asthma treatment—which the hospital doctors were convinced would be proven superior.

After three months of using either the Buteyko or conventional treatments, the subjects were reevaluated for their use of bronchodilators and steroids and the frequency and duration of attacks. The doctors' confidence in their traditional treatment was shattered when they say that the Buteyko method helped 90 percent of asthma patients reduce or eliminate their use of bronchodilators—while the control group increased use by 9 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Subjects in the Buteyko group also decreased their use of steroids by 49 percent, while the control group showed no change in their use of the drugs. Overall asthma symptoms were also significantly relieved for those following the

<sup>1</sup>Med J Aust, 174(2);72-4,2001

<sup>2</sup>Med J Aust,169(1);575-8. 1998

<sup>A</sup> See end of article

Buteyko method, with 71 percent showing an improvement in symptom occurrence. Only 14 percent in the control group showed reduced symptoms. A follow-up eight months later revealed that the Buteyko patients continued to get the same level of relief without drugs as they had at the end of the three-month study.

### **Easy enough for a three-year-old to master<sup>B</sup>**

To test Dr. Buteyko's methods, the Medical Institute of E. M. Sechenov in Russia approved a study involving 52 children ages three to 15.<sup>3</sup> All of them had suffered with asthma, some for as long as five years.

Before learning the Buteyko method, all of the children had to use pharmaceuticals, either regularly or intermittently, for asthma attacks or asthma-related problems. Most were selected for the study because their extensive use of drugs had not improved their health or reduced their asthma attacks. Only 10 percent had never been hospitalized, while 90 percent were regular hospital patients.

Patients were given daily instruction for seven days and practiced the Buteyko breathing lessons on their own time to reinforce their instruction. The Buteyko method was so easy and intuitive that most subjects mastered the basic breathing lessons within five to fifteen minutes!

The patients were told they could start taking their medications if they were unable to stop an asthma attack after 10 to 15 minutes. For the few subjects who continued to depend on these drugs, their use was reduced by 200 -300 percent.

An astounding 73 percent of the children discontinued all use of medications the moment they started the Buteyko breathing lessons. Of the remainder, 15 percent decreased their use of drugs after three to four days.

### **Your body will also have to adjust to correct breathing**

The foundation of the Buteyko method is learning to breathe through the nose instead of the mouth. To do so, students are walked through a series of short exercises, all focused on measured, slow breathing.

While the method doesn't include the use of drugs, there are possible side effects. Since your body has to adjust for different—but correct—levels of oxygen and CO<sub>2</sub>, it will have to change some of its functions and defense mechanisms. Part

of this process is a self-cleansing procedure associated with purging excess mucus, accumulated toxins, and pathogenic microbes from the body. Dr. Buteyko found that these cleansing reactions generally occur two or three times and last from several hours to two days.

Some of the reactions include the following:

- Nervous excitement
- Chills and/or raised temperature
- Headaches
- Muscular, intestinal, and chest pains
- Weakness
- Hypersecretion of mucus
- Appetite loss
- Nausea and vomiting
- Thirst
- Excessive salivation when smelling medication
- Increased urination and defecation

### **92,000 Russians are asthma-free...thanks to Buteyko**

Dr. Buteyko's breathing methods have been widely used in the former Soviet Union and Russia, where it has been proven 92 percent successful in treating asthma. Over 100,000 Russians have been treated with this therapy, and 92,000 of them continue to be free of all asthma medications.<sup>4</sup>

Asthma sufferers, regardless of age, can benefit from the Buteyko method.<sup>4</sup> From mild to severe, asthmatic attacks can be squelched almost as quick as they happen. Better yet, they can be prevented from occurring in the first place—because the method actually eliminates the *cause* of the disease.

While there are practitioners and clinics that teach the Buteyko breathing lessons, they are few and far between. And they usually charge \$400 - \$500 per person for the course. Fortunately you can **get all the same information<sup>C</sup>** taught in these courses for a lot less money by ordering the Buteyko Home Education Kit. The kit includes a video, a manual, and a workbook—everything you need to learn the method. The 60 minute video is VHS format and even includes a section on teaching the Buteyko method to children. Ordering information is available on page 8.

If you're under a doctor's care for any health problems, **you should let him know that you're planning to use the Buteyko method.<sup>D</sup>** The changes in your medication requirements—and possibly eliminate them altogether.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.wt.com.au/~pkolb/clinical.htm>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.wt.breathconnection.com/faq.htm#m>

<sup>5</sup> J Asthma, 37(7):557-64,2000

**B,C,D See end of article**

# Practitioner Comments

**A** Low levels of CO<sub>2</sub> actually RAISE your pH, wreaking havoc with your body's natural healthy biochemistry and causing the lower available O<sub>2</sub> levels in cells (Bohr effect)

**B** While there have been 3 year olds who have learned the technique and made GREAT strides, it was certainly not easy. The earliest age we Buteyko practitioners feel is 'easy' is 6.

**C** Well, no, actually, you DON'T get ALL the same information. A practitioner is trained to work with you and give you much MORE than can be given in the Home Education Kit which HAS to be geared to the lowest common denominator, which is quite low. There are certain exercises not taught at all in the H.E.K., because we don't know, and can't see, how well or poorly a person is breathing and what reactions they are having. In addition, in a class we can more easily answer your individual questions and address your own idiosyncrasies. Also, the H.E.K can't possibly give you the intangible, but quite significant benefit of hearing and seeing the other people in the class? their questions ? which you may not have thought of) and their reactions - which you really didn't think were reactions and therefore weren't going to address, question or discuss. Frequently someone in the class who is doing very well will talk about their experience and discoveries. It benefits everyone in the class. On the flip side, someone having difficulties will be able to talk about their blocks and hearing the answer may hit a cord with you and some problems you were having but hadn't come to the point of addressing.

**D** Weeeeee, **IF** you have a doctor willing to hear these things. Most US doctors have not even HEARD of Buteyko, much less going to length of supporting the theory. It DOES run contrary to much of western medical practice/theory (how can breathing differently possibly help your asthma when it is triggered by specific 'things'? those 'things' are still there?). We recommend you go AFTER you have started the course. Have your doctor assess your medical state and adjust medication accordingly. Ask how often you should check back, or just go back with every 10 second gain. For those of you wondering what a '10 second gain' is....Buteyko measures progress in your ability to **comfortably** hold your breath for a certain number of seconds. Every one of those 10 second gains means a very significant gain in your health, your need for medication and your need to adjust your life to avoid your triggers.

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