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Our newsletter needs a name! What do you think it should be called?

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· The Rockford Asthma Consortium is part of the Respiratory Disease Task Force of the Rockford Health Council.

· The mission of the Rockford Asthma Consortium is to reduce morbidity and mortality and enhance the quality of life for people with asthma living in Winnebago, Boone, and Ogle counties.

· The Rockford Asthma Consortium is made up of individuals and representatives of institutions and organizations interested in asthma.

· The Rockford Asthma Consortium includes several committees: Data, Education, Research, and Schools.

· For more information about the Rockford Asthma Consortium or any of its activities, please contact the Rockford Health Council at 395-5701.

The Faces of Asthma: Stuart Tousman, Ph.D.

“The Faces of Asthma” is an introduction to some of the people whose personal or professional lives are touched by asthma. If you have a suggestion for a “face” you’d like to see here, please get in touch.

I am Stuart Tousman, Professor of Psychology at Rockford College and chair of the education committee of the Rockford Asthma Consortium. I am very excited to be a part of such a strong asthma consortium since I have had asthma since I was a child.

I was diagnosed with the disease in 1967 (at the age of 3) while growing up in New Jersey. I had very severe asthma as a child; I missed lots of school days and had lots of trouble in gym. The drug of choice for severe asthma was Tedril, which was a combination of theophylline, ephedrine, and phenobarbital. Besides only helping my asthma a little, it had the worst possible licorice taste ever! I was very pleased when albuterol and Vanceril (an inhaled corticosteroid) were introduced into my life in the mid-1970's. These drugs changed my

life and let me excel in my everyday adventures. I took my Vanceril each day and my symptoms were gone! By the time I was a teenager I was beginning to excel in my schoolwork and in my favorite exercise of biking. I began biking during my early teenage years. I would do 20-30 miles with my dad, and each year would do more. My feelings of accomplishment and success really meant a great deal to me. By the early 1980's I was biking 100 miles in a day. I always got a real thrill in biking up the hardest hills successfully! I continued biking when I went to The Ohio State University in 1982 to pursue a psychology degree. In 1985 I graduated and returned to New Jersey, and was accepted into SUNY-Binghamton for the fall of 1986. Figuring my life would be over once graduate school started, I decided to take a week-long bike ride in the summer of 1986. On a beautiful New Jersey day I started biking north; one week and 600 miles later I was in Portland, Maine.

The final major bike ride I took was in 1988 when I took a one-day, 200-mile bike ride from Binghamton, New York to Edison, New Jersey! After obtaining my doctorate in psychology from SUNY-Binghamton, I was hired to teach psychology at Rockford College. When I heard that Rockford was forming an asthma consortium, I decided that I wanted to be a part of the action. At Rockford College I run an asthma self-management program each summer. I also assist with planning the Rockford Asthma Consortium's yearly conference. I am involved in state asthma groups and even national asthma groups. If I were going to have a disease I would have to pick asthma! I take my medication each day and live a normal, healthy, active life, and I want to see others do the same thing.

For questions or suggestions about this publication, please contact Stuart Tousman at stousman@aol.com or Sara Powell at polyglot@core.com.

This publication is a product of the Rockford Asthma Consortium's Education Committee.

Its intent is to encourage a partnership between asthma patients and their families and health care providers; it is not intended to replace the care and advice of medical professionals.

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Welcome to the first issue of the Rockford Asthma Consortium's quarterly newsletter. We hope to bring you helpful information, but we need your feedback; please let us know what you want to see here. We also need your help to develop a name; please share your ideas! Look for the next issue in your mailbox this fall.

Coming events:

•Adult Education and Support Groups

3 separate programs will begin this summer:

Wednesday, June 2nd, 6-8 pm, at Swedish American Hospital;
Wednesday, June 9th, 1-2:30 pm, at Crusader Clinic on State St.;
Wednesday, June 16th, 1-2:30 pm La Voz Latina.

For more information, call Ray Empereur at the Rockford Health Council, 395-5701, or e-mail rayemp@aol.com.

This program, made available by the Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America, is designed for adults who have asthma, any parent/foster parent of a child with asthma, or any child care provider who cares for a child with asthma. At our monthly meetings we will help you gather relevant information about asthma and offer emotional support.

•"Blow the Whistle on Asthma" Walk

The American Lung Association's Asthma Walk will be held on **Sunday, June 6, 2004, at Midway Village and Museum Center.**

For more information, call 1-800-LUNG-USA or go to www.lungilia.org.

•Adult Self-Management Program

This scientifically-based program is designed for adults with asthma who want to make lifestyle changes to improve their health. Adults with asthma meet once a week for two months to learn about the disease. Local asthma experts will participate. The program begins **Tuesday, June 15th from 6-8 pm at Rockford College.**

For more information, call Ray Empereur at the Rockford Health Council, 395-5701, or e-mail rayemp@aol.com.

There is no charge for this program.

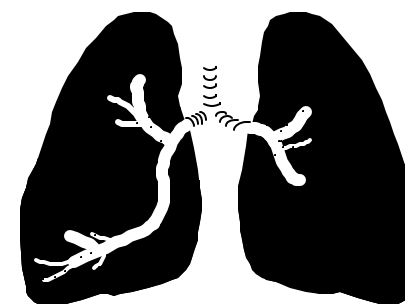
You can now find the Rockford Asthma Consortium on-line! Our website is still partially under construction, but it has links to some outstanding sites for asthma information. Go to www.rockfordasthmaconsortium.org

What is Asthma?

Asthma (noun) · A respiratory condition marked by attacks of spasm in the bronchi of the lungs, causing difficulty in breathing and usually associated with allergic reaction. (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth Edition.)

Take a look at the picture at the bottom of this page. The trachea is single tube at the top of the lungs. It splits into two tubes—one for each lung—that are called bronchi (the singular is bronchus). Each bronchus splits into smaller tubes called bronchioles. Asthma primarily happens in the bronchi.

The problem with Oxford's definition of asthma is that it leaves out something very important: Asthma is not something that just happens once in a while; it's always there.



The current research says that there are two primary causes for asthma symptoms; inflammation and muscle spasm (also called bronchoconstriction). Inflammation is irritation; the lining of the bronchi is always a bit irritated, or tends to get that way very easily. When the lining gets irritated, it swells, making the bronchi narrower; less air can get through. The irritated lining also produces mucus, which takes up more space and lets even less air through. Irritation on the inside of the bronchi also causes the muscles on the outside of the bronchi to spasm, making the bronchi even smaller still. The research says that the narrowed bronchi limit the amount of stale air going *out*, but any asthmatic will tell you that breathing *in* is the problem. In reality, it's both: The stale air can't get out, and it takes up the empty space that normally lets fresh air come in.

To treat asthma, we have to treat both causes (inflammation and muscle spasm). Some asthma

medicines are meant to be used every day, and some are meant to be used only when you need them. Check with your doctor and make sure you know when and how often you are supposed to use the medicine that is prescribed for you.

Allergies can be part of the reason for asthma; asthma symptoms can be a kind of allergic reaction. However, allergies aren't always to blame. There are things that are irritating to everyone's lungs, even if they don't have asthma; but if you do have asthma, the irritation is much worse. Things in the air like air fresheners, perfumes, pollution, smoke, and strong smells are irritants, and may make your asthma symptoms worse.

Asthma is always there, but there are things that you can do to reduce its impact on your life. Check with your doctor to find out how.