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History of Asthma Treatment

Estimates are that about 6 million children and 14 million adults in the United States suffer from asthma. Asthma is the leading chronic disease among American children so it's highly likely that you or one of your classmates suffer from asthma. In fact, the number of people around the world who suffer from asthma has about doubled in the last 30 years and researchers estimate that 100 million people now suffer from asthma. Asthma affects the lungs and when an asthma attack occurs a person has difficulty breathing.

Even though the number of people with asthma is increasing, it is by no means a new disease for humans. History records asthma cases thousands of years ago. Medical historians have found a book written by a Chinese doctor called the Yellow Emperor; this book contains a description of a disease and the herb used to treat. This description matches the disease asthma. The book was written in 2600 B.C.E.! Around 1920 American doctors began successfully treating asthma patients with ephedrine. Amazing enough, ephedrine comes from the same plant that the Yellow Emperor said was effective for asthma thousands of years earlier.

Over the centuries doctors from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome left behind medical texts that described asthma and their



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recommended treatments at the time. Around 150 B.C.E. a Roman doctor recognized that asthma affected the bronchial tubes and lungs. Thomas Sydenham, an English doctor in the 1660s, did determine that asthma was associated with clogged bronchial tubes. An Egyptian doctor of the 12th Century, Moses Maimonides suggested a reduction in the sufferer's stress level, a dry climate along with eating chicken soup to relieve asthma symptoms.

One radical treatment for asthma that was tried in the 1940s was a parentectomy. Some doctors believed that family stress contributed to childhood asthma. Parentectomy meant a removal from parents; instead children lived at an asthma treatment center. Aren't you glad that modern medicine has progressed away from that kind of idea?

(Remember, this is a history lesson. If you have asthma, follow your doctor's orders.)



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Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. The leading chronic childhood disease in the United States is
 - a. Colds
 - b. Flu
 - c. Measles
 - d. Asthma

2. Asthma affects
 - a. Lungs
 - b. Heart
 - c. Liver
 - d. Spleen

3. The oldest medical book that describes asthma is from
 - a. Egypt
 - b. China
 - c. Greece
 - d. Ancient Rome

4. In about the last thirty years the number of people worldwide that suffer from asthma has
 - a. Decreased by one-quarter
 - b. Decreased by one-half
 - c. Doubled
 - d. Tripled

5. What did Egyptian doctor Moses Maimonides suggest as an asthma treatment?
 - a. Reduction in stress
 - b. A dry climate
 - c. Eating chicken soup
 - d. All of the above

6. In the 1940s a radical treatment for asthma in children was
 - a. Appendectomy
 - b. Tonsillectomy
 - c. Parentectomy
 - d. All of the above



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Short Answer Questions

1. What does the term chronic disease mean? If you don't know the answer, look it up.
2. With a team of your classmates, do some research and find out about the link between childhood obesity and asthma.
3. Do some research and write a short report about Moses Maimonides.
4. Have a class discussion about the symptoms and problems that kids with asthma experience.
5. Write a short story about a child of the 1940s who has "had a parentectomy."
6. A modern method for diagnosing asthma is a pulmonary function test. Do some research and explain about this test.
7. The Ebers family traveled in a program called World Bike for Breath. Do some research and write a short report about their travels and what they accomplished.



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Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. d.
2. a.
3. b.
4. c.
5. d.
6. c.

Short Answer

1. A chronic disease is one that lasts a long time, perhaps ever for a person's entire life.
2. Individual response
3. Individual response
4. Individual response
5. Individual response
6. Individual response
7. Individual response

