

# Ask The Specialists

The best advice, straight from the doctor's clinic. Here's how to prevent nagging problems right now

EVERYONE NEEDS a specialist to address their wellness needs. At *Brunch* we've brought together a few experts who have developed specific tips to combat some common and not-so-common ailments. Let the best doctors in business tell you how to keep heart trouble at bay, curb diabetes, manage asthma,

resolve infertility, fight infections, keep your skin healthy and even stop headaches. These tips go beyond the usual advice about drinking more water, exercising regularly, eating fruits and veggies and slathering on sunscreen. They are designed to help you make specific changes to your lifestyle and emerge healthier and wiser.

## Dr VIKRAM JAGGI: Cope with asthma

Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be easily and completely controlled, so that the asthmatic can live an absolutely normal life. Here's how:

■ **Accept.** Patients don't like to be told that they have asthma. Doctors also know this. So they couch the diagnosis in nicer sounding words like 'bronchitis' or 'chest congestion.' This only delays proper treatment. So my sincere advice is to accept the diagnosis and start looking for practical and doable solutions.

■ **Have the right attitude.** A person with poor vision could choose to be angry that he has to wear glasses. Or he could be happy that spectacles are a simple solution. It's all about attitude. It's the same with asthma. Asthma medications and inhalers are easy to use and help patients breathe normally.

■ **Explore alternative healing.** Alternative systems like yoga, homeopathy, ayurveda and naturopathy do have something to offer asthmatics. They don't help all patients equally. If you have faith, you could try them. But my advice would be not to stop the normal treatment suddenly.

■ **Keep your expectations realistic.** Adults rarely outgrow their asthma. This is largely determined by genes over which we don't have control. Environmental control and diet regulation help. If a child is to outgrow asthma, it will happen over years and not days, weeks or months. With

proper medications, the asthmatic is usually well controlled in the sense that there are no ongoing symptoms or limitations of activities. However, with change of season or with a viral infection, some symptoms will appear. This is not unexpected. A slight increase in medication will usually bring things back to normal.

■ **Care, don't pamper.** Mothers sometimes try to over-compensate the asthmatic child by over-pampering. This never helps. In fact, it creates further difficulties in that the child starts using the asthma, sometimes sub-consciously, to get his way.

■ **Be a sport.** The asthmatic gets out of breath easily and is usually not into sports. But with proper control of asthma, the person can and should have a normal life including participating in sports. Sports involving spurts of activity are usually better than prolonged exertion like long-distance running. Swimming is usually good.

■ **Watch your diet.** Diet can affect asthma in many ways. Some foods like peanuts, chilled beer, seafood can immediately cause an attack. Others like fried snacks, preservatives, colours and certain ingredients in Chinese food promote allergy. Some foods cause acid reflux and night-time symptoms. Examples are rice or curd at night, fried food and desserts.

Foods that help fight asthma and allergy are antioxidants in fruits and leafy vegetables, vitamin C and magnesium.

■ **Master your emotions.** Anger, frustration and depression are some common emotions that make asthma worse. Many patients of what is called 'difficult-to-control asthma' have underlying psychological issues.

These have to be addressed. Asthma patients who are generally optimistic tend to respond better to treatment

