Natural Relief for Asthma, COPD and Allergies

Did you know that one of nature's most powerful anti-inflammatory medicines can be found by scraping the bark of a tree? In ancient times, this special resin extract was known as frankincense. Today it is known as "boswellia" and we are finally beginning to understand why it is helpful in treating everything from irritable bowel to cancer. In this Terry Talks Nutrition®, I’d like to focus on boswellia’s ability to help those with asthma and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease).

Considered one of the most beneficial herbs, boswellia (Boswellia serrata) deserves special merit. Native to India, the boswellia tree thrives in very dry environments. Traditionally, resin from the tree is considered the medicinal part of the plant, and gathering it is a very ‘hands-on’ form of harvesting, bearing some resemblance to collecting sap to make syrup from sugar maples. When the bark of the tree is scraped, it secretes a resin called “tears.” The resulting gum from these tears is what has long been known as frankincense.

Boswellia can assist in a broad spectrum of respiratory complaints. It opens airways, reduces bronchial and sinus swelling, and helps relieve the worst of allergy symptoms. Whether your concern is asthma, allergies, COPD, or just seasonal respiratory colds, the right boswellia extract can make a big difference.

Asthma is a chronic condition that is all too common. There are multiple causes of asthma, and they often work together in ways that aren’t completely understood. An asthma attack can be triggered by a number of things: pollen and allergies, dust, cold air, nervousness or tension, exercise, or pollution. Some individuals are more prone to asthma than others, so genetics may play a part in this, too.

When someone has an asthma attack, their bronchial airways narrow and tighten. The inflammation produces mucous, which adds to the “out of breath” feeling. Severe attacks can be very frightening, and unfortunately, the anxiety over possible attacks can make even mild symptoms much worse.

While there are medications that alleviate symptoms, they can also bring about a number of side-effects, including agitation, aggression, or depression.

How Boswellia Helps
Boswellia is effective for a variety of health conditions and diseases because, as different from one another as IBS and asthma may seem, they share one thing in common: inflammation.

Boswellia is a specific inhibitor of 5-LOX, an enzyme that activates leukotrienes, which induce inflammation. Leukotrienes are responsible for many of the symptoms of asthma. Although other botanical compounds do relieve inflammation, many of them do so as antioxidants. They reduce oxidative stress and damage, and in turn, reduce inflammation. And they work well, but aren’t as direct as boswellia, or another of my top botanicals, curcumin (which operates through COX-2 inhibition).

Most specifically, boswellic acids are the compounds responsible for the botanical’s effects. The most active of the boswellic acids is known as AKBA (Acetyl-11-keto-β-boswellic acids).

To your good health,
Terry... Naturally

TERRY’S BOTTOM LINE:

If you have asthma, allergies, or COPD, you can breathe easy. Boswellia helps balance 5-LOX, the inflammatory enzyme that activates leukotrienes. The right high-AKBA extract, low in beta-boswellic acids, provides relief for:

Asthma
• Balances 5-LOX, reducing leukotriene activity and inflammation
• Clinically tested results – 70% saw improvement!

Allergies
• Inhibits mast cells that trigger histamine

COPD
• Inhibits HLE, alleviating the “shortness of breath” feeling

Here is the formula I suggest:

For asthma, allergies, or COPD, I recommend taking 500-1,000 mg of standardized boswellia extract daily.

While I am not telling you to throw away your inhaler and take boswellia instead, the good news is that clinical studies with boswellia have been very positive.

In a double-blind, placebo-controlled, 6-week clinical study, boswellia was tested in...
Not all boswellia products are created equal. AKBA, a very important boswellic acid that is strongly anti-inflammatory, can have levels as low as 1% in unstandardized boswellia products. To make sure you get the best, look for boswellia standardized to at least 10% AKBA. Also, researchers found that one of the boswellic acids, called “beta boswellic acid,” is actually PRO-inflammatory – clearly the last thing you want when dealing with asthma.

The best products are purified, with the beta-boswellic acid filtered out to less than 5% of the extract. Unstandardized products can be as much as 25%, so it’s important to know what to look for! Plus, making sure your boswellia extract meets these standards ensures that you’ll see results similar to those found in clinical studies.

**Allergies**

Many of the same conditions that cause asthma reactions cause both of these conditions. For people with chronic sinusitis, boswellia presents a real chance to break out of that cycle of infections, by reducing the irritation and inflammation that can bring about allergy and sinus reactions in the first place.

Anyone who suffers from allergic rhinitis, better known as “hay fever”, knows that the physical discomforts of seasonal flare-ups are a real problem. In any given year, over 17 million adults and almost 9 million American children are diagnosed. And, even though we often dismiss the sneezing, runny nose, and discomfort as “just allergies,”

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40 individuals with asthma ranging from 18 to 75 years old and a mix of 23 men and 17 women. At the end of the study, 70% showed marked improvement!

In another clinical study, boswellia in a combination showed similar results. In this placebo-controlled study, 63 patients were divided into two groups; one received the herbal combination [boswellia, licorice root (Glycyrrhiza glabra) and turmeric root (Curcuma longa)], the other a placebo. At the end of the 4 week study, the herbal group showed a statistically significant drop in leukotriene levels and other inflammatory markers compared to the placebo group.

I have often recommended boswellia with a high-absorption curcumin extract, so these results don’t surprise me a bit. If you do use a combination, make sure you get a curcumin extract that is blended with turmeric oils for better absorption.

That brings me to a point about boswellia – it’s important to select the right boswellia extract.

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**Boswellia Gum Extract and Improvement of Asthma**

![Figure 3](image)

In a double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 70% of those in the boswellia group showed notable improvement of asthma symptoms, vs. only 27% of those in the placebo group. Boswellia reduced asthma attacks and other physical markers.
Americans take over-the-counter and prescription drugs each year to overcome them. Unfortunately, those conventional approaches usually bring a lot of unwelcome side effects, including jitteriness, fatigue, mental fog, and irritability. I’ve known many people who, by the end of allergy season, start to consider these synthetic “cures” worse than the “disease”.

Fortunately, boswellia shows great promise for anyone with allergies. In an allergic response, the body produces compounds that attach themselves to immune system cells called mast cells. When this happens, the mast cells release large amounts of histamine. The histamine reaction creates swelling and induces more inflammation, redness, and itching.

Scientific study has shown that boswellia can inhibit the action of mast cells, which respond to triggers by releasing histamine. Plus, the very fact that boswellia does such excellent work keeping inflammation at bay makes it a perfect for reducing sinus pressure and swelling that make allergy flare-ups so miserable.

For many people, it’s a stuffy nose or a runny nose, or the irritating combination of both that signal the sinusitis as a result of an allergic attack. If you’ve experienced sinus pain, you know how serious a case of sinusitis can be, and how it can completely sideline you. For many people, the conventional choices for sinus relief are not attractive. Like allergy medicines, many synthetic drugs for sinusitis either cause jitteriness or grogginess. A high-AKBA boswellia extract like the one I recommend can make a big difference without the side effects.

**COPD**

And, for those struggling with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), boswellia offers hope, too. Emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and other troublesome respiratory symptoms are triggered, in part, by the human leukocyte elastase (also abbreviated “HLE”). So, not only does someone feel as though they can’t get a “full breath” of air, they may notice more mucus adding to the “drowning” feeling that these conditions bring on.

Fortunately, research shows that boswellia also specifically inhibits this leukocyte, reducing the likelihood of the body’s reaction that causes this response.

**Boswellia and Leading Research – New Frontiers**

When we hear the word “inflammation” we typically think about sore muscles or allergic responses. Inflammation at a cellular level is associated with virtually every disease state in the body. It certainly contributes to the growth of tumors by over-exciting the very bio-mechanisms that are intended to keep the body healthy.

My friend and colleague, Dr. Ajay Goel, has explored the ability of this high-AKBA boswellia extract to inhibit the growth of tumors in colorectal cells. He found that this extract induces DNA demethylation, so it can potentially prevent aberrant cell division. (DNA methylation is responsible for much of the improper cell growth that leads to tumor formation.) Overall, the high-AKBA boswellic extract inhibited cell proliferation, decreased cancer cell viability, and decreased clonogenic (the mutated cells that create tumors) survival. In fact, this extract can actually reactivate tumor-suppressing genes, which can put the body on a path toward healing itself.

This is extremely exciting news – and it shows that we are just beginning to appreciate the full benefits of this astounding botanical.

**Breathe Easy and Live Better with Boswellia!**

Respiratory problems can really sideline a person. It inhibits the triggers that cause these problems in the first place, and does it without the side effects of common synthetic drugs. Plus, boswellia relieves inflammation throughout the body, and may even stop tumors in their tracks.

Be sure to look for a boswellia extract that provides 500 mg of *Boswellia serrata* gum resin extract standardized for AKBA content. And, be certain that it filters out beta-boswellic acids, too. This way, you’ll get all of the impressive benefits of boswellia for vibrant, optimal health. You owe it to your health to enjoy this amazing gift from nature and breathe a little easier.

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