

Asthma Pitfalls

♣ **Antibiotics are NOT recommended for the treatment of acute asthma** exacerbations except as needed for comorbid conditions. Bacterial , Chlamydia or Mycoplasma infections infrequently contribute to exacerbations of asthma and therefore the use of antibiotics is reserved for patients with fever and purulent sputum, evidence of pneumonia, or suspected bacterial sinusitis.¹

♣ **Routine pneumococcal immunizations have not been proven to be beneficial in asthmatics.** A randomized controlled trial of vaccine efficacy in children and adults with asthma is needed.²

♣ **Routine chest radiographs are unnecessary in the asthmatic patient.** Radiographs should be considered when there is clinical evidence of pneumonia, if a pneumothorax or atelectasis is suspected, or if the patient does not rapidly respond to initial therapy.^{3,4} Radiographs are NOT diagnostic for asthma. Radiographs have been found to be no different between asthmatics and those patients with acute bronchitis.⁵ And most recently, there was found to be no statistical association between radiographic findings and hypoxemia, hospital length of stay or ICU admissions.⁶ The NAEPP Expert Panel Report 2 states that Chest x ray may be useful in excluding diagnoses other than asthma.

Cough Suppressants are not indicated in asthma- the old adage is that a cough suppressant is not to be used in any sputum producing disorder, asthma is one of those.

1. National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Expert Panel Report: Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma Update on Selected Topics—2002. *J Allergy and Clin Immunol*, Vol 110, Number 5, Supplement, November 2002.
2. Sheikh A. Alves B. Dhami S. Pneumococcal vaccine for asthma. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. (1): CD002165,2002.
3. Findley LJ. Sahn SA. The value of chest roentgenograms in acute asthma in adults. *Chest*. 80(5):535-6,1981 Nov.
4. Dalton AM. A review of radiological abnormalities in 135 patients presenting with acute asthma. *Archives of Emergency Medicine*. 8(1):36-40, 1991 Mar.
5. Rubenstein HS. Rosner BA. LeMay M. Neidorf R. The value of the chest X-ray in making the diagnosis of bronchial asthma. *Adolescence*. 28 (111):505-16, 1993 Fall.
6. Tsai SL. Crain EF. Silver EJ. Goldman HS. What can we learn from chest radiographs in hypoxemic asthmatics? *Pediatric Radiology*. 32(7):498-504,2002 Jul.