

Popcorn Lung Disease

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Increasingly, we live in a convenience-addicted society, we look for easier ways to do everything, to the point that we sometimes lose perspective, even in simple things. Some would say that our health (or lack of health) is the price we pay, as a result.

For example, one of my favorite treats is salty, buttered popcorn . . . not that huge, \$5.00 box they sell at the movie theater, rather the little, cellophane-wrapped package from Orville or Jolly Time. Like most people my age (75), I used to pop it in a lid-covered pan, and add the butter and salt when it hit the bowl, but over the years, I became spoiled, just like most people. It happened about the same time we got our first Sears Microwave, long before I learned how dangerous and unhealthy these little square monsters with a window, are. All of our kids, and most of their friends, and most of our friends, kids, etc., have treated common sore throats with this tasty combination (butter and lots of salt), followed by a tablespoon full of honey. Works great!

Now, rather than eating old fashioned popcorn made on a stove, we have resorted to chemical-based, microwave popcorn. Some people call it "Frankencorn." As a result, we put ourselves at risk for a new disease: Popcorn lung, you heard me, "**Popcorn lung**."

In September 2007, ABC News reported on the first-known case of the illness. It turned up in a man who consumed large amounts of popcorn. Popcorn fanatic Wayne Watson ate about two bags daily, but now he has quit because of the havoc it reeked on his lungs. Watson had all the symptoms of a rare disease dubbed "popcorn lung," which derives its name because it was found in popcorn plant workers exposed to a flavoring ingredient called *diacetyl*. Diacetyl is a natural substance heated in a factory setting to give microwave popcorn its buttery taste. Diacetyl is also used to enhance other flavors. Popcorn lung is an irreversible disease that blocks the lungs from expelling air, slowly suffocating the sufferer.

A recent study released in September of 2008 by the *Institute for Risk*

Assessment Sciences suggests that exposure to diacetyl causes asthma and many other pulmonary problems.

Popcorn lung was first recognized in 2000 as a problem among factory workers. What's surprising is that the general population of consumers are being exposed to similar levels of these chemicals every time they consume the "Frankencorn." An article by *USA today* said that:

Consumers, not just factory workers, may be in danger from fumes of the buttery flavoring in microwave popcorn, according to a warning letter to federal regulators from Dr. Cecile Rose, of the National Jewish Medical Center in Denver, a leading lung research hospital. Dr. Rose had studied the disease and wondered whether there was a consumer connection. She knew the symptoms. "The very small airwaves called the bronchials become blocked by scar tissue and inflammation," Rose said. "You cannot blow air out."

The best alternative to microwave popcorn is to do it the old fashioned way, with real butter, real Sea or Himalayan salt, and coconut oil, on the stove top. It still a sure thing to bring much-wanted relief to a sore throat. Popcorn measurements for two adults and two kids:

In a 2 qt thick bottomed sauce pan, add:

4 tablespoons real organic salted butter
1 tablespoon coconut oil

Let oils warm with one kernel, when that pops add:
3/4 cups of corn kernels

Helpful hint: soak the kernels for 2-3 days to make huge puffy popcorn

Don't forget the honey if your popping it for therapeutic reasons, not just for enjoyment.

Enjoy! Lyle