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# Natural Treatments for Your Seasonal Allergies

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An allergy is an overaggressive immune response triggered by ingesting certain foods, touching certain substances, or inhaling an irritant such as pollen or animal dander. Allergies to pollen, spores, mold, and dust (also called hay fever or allergic rhinitis) affect the respiratory system and are usually the most difficult to control.

Symptoms of hay fever are sneezing, runny nose, stuffy nose, watery eyes, itchy eyes and nose, and headache. Hay fever is often seasonal (when pollen is in the air), but if constantly exposed to an offending substance (e.g., pet dander), symptoms can last year-round.

From a naturopathic viewpoint, allergies are often associated with weak adrenal, immune, and digestive functions. Natural treatments are used to support and improve those functions and to alleviate hay fever symptoms. For seasonal allergies, beginning natural treatments (e.g., Stinging nettles) 1–2 months before the season starts can help reduce the severity of symptoms. Good health can help ease allergy symptoms, and good health starts with nutrition. People sensitive to airborne allergens may also be sensitive to certain foods. Identifying and removing those foods from the diet can greatly improve health and reduce allergy symptoms. This is best accomplished by the elimination and challenge diet.

Nutrition

To reduce allergy symptoms, eat a moderately low-fat, high-complex-carbohydrate diet. Drink 1/2 of body weight in ounces of water daily (e.g., a 150 lb person would drink 75 oz of water).

* Include a lot of the following foods in the diet:
* Dark green, leafy vegetables
* Deep yellow and orange vegetables
* Nettles, bamboo shoots, cabbage, beet tops, beets, carrots, yams
* Onions, garlic, ginger, cayenne, horseradish

Eliminate the following from the diet:

* Alcohol, caffeine, and dairy products
* Bananas and citrus fruit
* Chocolate
* Food colorings (tartrazine)
* Peanuts
* Red meat
* Sugar
* Wheat

Supplements, Vitamins and Minerals

* Bioflavonoids (e.g., quercetin, catechin, and hesperidin) - Take 2-3 grams daily. When symptoms are severe, take up to 6 grams. Bioflavonoids are natural antihistamines and strongly anti-allergenic. Bromelain and vitamin C can enhance the action of bioflavonoids. Combination products are available.
* Flaxseed oil - Take 1 tbsp daily.
* Probiotics (e.g., lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidus) - Take one in the morning and one in the evening. Probiotics are bowel microflora organisms—microscopic bacteria that normally inhabit the intestines. Buy a quality product that has 1-4 billion organisms per capsule.
* Multivitamin – High potency and customized if possible.
* Vitamin A - Take 25,000 IUs daily.
* Vitamin C - Take 1-3 grams 2 to 3 times daily or to bowel tolerance. (Bowel tolerance is the amount of vitamin C that can be taken without causing diarrhea. This amount is different for each person and can change if the need increases because the body is stressed, injured, or ill.)
* Vitamin E - Take 400 IUs daily.
* Zinc - Take 30 mg daily.

Herbal Medicine

Herbal medicines rarely have significant side effects when used appropriately and at suggested doses. Occasionally, an herb at the prescribed dose causes stomach upset or headache. This may reflect the purity of the preparation or added ingredients, such as synthetic binders or fillers. For this reason, it is recommended that only high-quality products be used. As with all medications, more is not better and overdosing can lead to serious illness and death.

* Some of the herbs used to treat hay fever symptoms are as follows:
* Dong quai (Angelica sinensis) - Used as an antihistamine and anti-inflammatory.
* Eyebright (Euphrasia officinalis) - Reduces congestion and secretions. It is good for itchy eyes, sneezing, and excess mucus.
* Gingko (Gingko biloba) - Contains bioflavonoids and is used as an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.
* Milk thistle (Silybum marianum) - Helps reduce allergic, inflammatory, and histaminic reactions and supports liver function.
* Red clover (Trifolium pratense) - Helps build the body’s resistance to allergies.
* Stinging nettles (Urtica dioica) - Used as an antihistamine and anti-inflammatory.
* Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) - Reduces congestion and secretions.

Make a tea of one herb or a combination of herbs. Take 3 to 4 cups a day. If the herbs are in tincture form, combine several of them and take 1 -3 dropper 3 to 4 times a day.

Homeopathy

The standard dosage for acute symptom relief is 3 pellets of 30C every 4 hours until symptoms resolve. Lower potencies, such as 6X, 6C, 30X, may be given every 2 to 4 hours. If the right remedy is chosen, symptoms should improve shortly after the second dose. If there is no improvement after 3 doses, a different remedy is given. The following remedies have been shown to be effective in acute, symptomatic relief of hay fever or allergies:

* Allium cepa - Indicated for bland, non-irritating discharge from eyes; copious, watery, acrid discharge from nose; hoarseness; and feeling better in cool air and open room.
* Euphrasia - Indicated for symptoms such as copious, watery, acrid discharge from eyes; non-irritating discharge from nose; dry, hard cough; much sneezing; diarrhea; and feeling worse in open air.
* Natrum muriaticum - Indicated for watery or egg white-like discharges; cold sores; no sense of taste or smell; headaches; and feeling better outside.
* Nux vomica - Indicated for runny nose in daytime, then dry nose at night; violent sneezing; nose feels blocked but there is watery nasal discharge through one nostril; and feeling worse outside.
* Wyethia - Indicated for extreme itching in the nose and throat; throat feels swollen; back of throat is dry and burning; and sensation as if something were in nasal passages.

Hydrotherapy

* Castor Oil Packs
* Constitutional Hydrotherapy
* Cold cloth to the forehead
* Hot foot baths
* Nasal lavage

Other Recommendations

Acupuncture

* Adequate rest and relaxation
* Adrenal glandulars and thymus extracts to supportive the adrenal glands and the immune system.
* Desensitization - Bee pollen and homeopathic remedies are used to desensitize people to the plants to which they are allergic.
* Several minutes of vigorous exercise may relieve nasal congestion and stuffiness.

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