



Natural Measures for Seasonal Allergy Sufferers

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Spring, the season where allergy symptoms are most bothersome, arrived a few weeks ago. Up to 30% of adults and 40% of children suffer from annoying allergy symptoms. Allergic rhinitis, otherwise known as hay fever or seasonal allergies, is the most common allergic condition. Symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, post nasal drip, coughing, itchy, watery eyes, sinus pressure, and itchy throat. More far reaching symptoms include declines in concentration, disrupted sleep, and fatigue. The health care costs associated with allergies is upward of \$10 billion annually. Many allergy sufferers rely on prescription or over the counter medications for symptom relief. Antihistamines, decongestants and nasal steroids line medicine cabinets of many Americans. Common side effects such as respiratory infections, cardiac arrhythmias, elevated blood pressure, headaches and drug interactions are of concern. Fortunately, several natural supplements and botanical medicines provide safe, symptomatic relief for allergy sufferers. Before turning to prescription medications, attempt to identify the allergens in your environment and consider using the well known supplements and botanicals shown to provide relief from allergies.

Overactive Immune Response

Allergies can occur at any stage in life, can come and go, and vary according to geography, season and pollen counts. Symptoms arise when a part of our immune systems overreacts to harmless foreign proteins. We call these proteins that cause an allergic response antigens. Antigens include airborne pollens, grass, molds, fungal spores, dust mites, feathers, animal dander, and dust. When the allergens land on our nasal passages or are inhaled they are captured and presented to our immune system's memory cells. These memory cells orchestrate a cellular army that includes antibodies ready for the next time the same or a similar protein presents itself. Upon the next contact, antigens bind to antibodies on our mast cells and basophils resulting in release of histamine. A chain reaction occurs resulting in swelling, itching, drainage, sneezing, etc. Another caveat to allergies is that foods like eggs, some nuts, wheat, dairy products and some

seafood can trigger allergy symptoms in susceptible individuals. Conventional allergy skin testing or RAST tests often fail to detect these food allergies. How can you get relief without medications?

Natural Allergy Relief

To start, remove antigen containing debris that gathers on nasal mucosa with periodic lavage of the nasal passages using 1/4 to 1/2 tsp of sea salt, 1 cup of warm water and a neti pot. Perform this routine a couple of times daily including at bedtime. Vitamin A is important for immune system function and mucous membrane integrity. Applied topically to the nasal mucosa, it helps create a barrier that antigens find difficult to penetrate. The powerful bioflavonoid quercetin is an extract of vegetables such as onions. It is a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory that prevents histamine release from mast cells and basophils. In addition to oral administration, it can be administered in a nasal spray along with vitamin A. Bromelain is an enzyme extracted from the stem of the pineapple plant. It prevents mucosal swelling and inflammation associated with allergy symptoms. Omega-3 fatty acids such as those found in cold water fish, and flax seeds tune down pro-inflammatory prostaglandins while promoting anti-inflammatory prostaglandins. Take 2 Tbsp of ground flax seed or 1-2 Tbsp of a purified fish oil daily depending on the concentration. Several botanicals are used with great success by allergy sufferers. *Urtica dioica*, known as nettles is strongly anti-inflammatory and helps prevent the release of histamine from mast cells. Long term use decreases the frequency and severity of allergy symptoms. A few other botanicals useful for allergic rhinitis are *Echinacea*, *Glycyrrhiza* (licorice), *Hydrastis* (goldenseal) and *Euphrasia* (eye bright.)

Remaining Points

Don't forget the importance of identifying and removing allergy triggers when possible. Consider house hold dust or pets as a possible source. Also, mold from dark damp areas or leaking pipes should be removed. Have carpets and drapes professionally cleaned. Use hypoallergenic body products without added dyes, and fragrances. If symptoms are severe consider replacing carpet with hard flooring and drapes with blinds. Hypoallergenic bedding like dust mite proof mattress and pillow covers and HEPA filters can be purchased from www.nationalallergy.com. Lastly, a dietary connection may exist between the foods you eat and your allergy symptoms. Simple blood testing performed by a naturopathic doctor may reveal a link between these foods and your allergies. If you're still going through boxes of Kleenex, visit our office for an individualized treatment plan to safely put a stop to your suffering. Don't endure another season with allergies!