

Natural Remedies for Seasonal Allergies

By Frank Gemmato, LAc

Ah Spring! Warmer weather, gentle rain, trees and flowers blooming, the smell of fresh-cut grass... Ahhhh...choooo! Hay fever sufferers dread it: the coming of Spring. Because it means the misery of itchy noses and teary eyes, sneezing, runny noses, and clogged sinuses. For some it goes on all summer long, for others it vanishes as quickly as it began. Many seek symptomatic relief in over the counter antihistamines, which in the long run can drive the allergy deeper into the system, resulting in asthma. Others find that allergy shots can help. Still others just suffer.

The New Integrated Medicine

Natural approaches to seasonal allergies offer a viable alternative to the suppressive effects of many drugs. These gentle treatments, combined with conventional methods, represent an emerging model of health care known as Integrated Medicine.

In the case of hayfever, Integrated Medicine would focus away from offending pollens and look into the internal ecology of the patient. An unhealthy, run-down individual is more likely to have a compromised immune system, and thereby be more sensitive to allergens in the atmosphere. Persons who have consumed many drugs and have accumulated many toxins in their systems are also more likely to have allergic responses. High levels of stress and a diet composed mainly of junk food are also likely to cause symptoms.

Nutrition

A diet low in sugar and fats, especially *trans*fats, which are contained in margarine and many snack foods will help. Having the right ratio of carbohydrates to quality proteins and essential fatty acids is a key to creating a healthier internal environment. Consumption of red meats and dairy products should be decreased or eliminated because of their high arachidonic acid content. A vegan cleansing diet or vegetable juice fasts followed by a vegetarian diet may be helpful if high levels of toxicity are present, but should only be attempted under the supervision of a health care professional.

Eat foods high in antioxidants (flavonoids and carotenoids) like dark green leafy vegetables, deep yellow and orange vegetables. Also cabbage, garlic, ginger, onion, beets, carrots, leafy vegetables, and yams aid in benefiting the liver and immune system.

Foods to avoid include dairy, wheat, eggs, citrus fruits, chocolate, shellfish and processed foods. Also avoid food intolerances: especially milk, chocolate, wheat, cheese, bananas, peanuts, citrus, and food colorings.

Supplements like Zinc and Vitamin C may also be helpful in improving immune response. The herbs Stinging Nettles (*urtica dioica*) and Euphorbium are highly effective in dealing with the symptoms of hayfever.

Chinese Medicine and Homeopathy

In terms of Chinese medicine, hayfever is the result of a deficiency in the Lungs and Spleen, or accumulation of Heat in the Liver, depending on the person. A variety of patent formulas is available to correct these organ imbalances. Acupuncture releases blockages associated with hayfever and allergy symptoms and boosts the immune system. Japanese acupuncture techniques revive a state of glandular exhaustion which can cause chronic sinus disturbances.

Homeopathic remedies, now available in most drug and health food stores, can also provide astonishing relief of hayfever symptoms with no side effects. Allium sepa, for example, will usually take away watery discharge from nose and eyes with sneezing

The new Integrated Medicine offers alternative treatments to those plagued with recurrent hayfever and seasonal allergies. Many who dread the first day of Spring may soon feel comfortable on a warm sunny day when the pollen count is high...

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