

April Showers bring May Flowers and ... Ah Ah Ah Chooooo!
By Dr. Robert Mirandola

With spring now upon us, most of us are excited to get outdoors and run, bike, garden, or just enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. However, if you are one of 35 million Americans who suffer from coughing, sneezing, wheezing, or dry watery eyes this time of year, spring means... allergy season!

Although very “common” among many of us, allergies are not a “normal” reaction toward our outside environment. Allergies are the immune system’s reaction to substances found in our external environment known as allergens, such as dander, pollen, mold, and dust. When these allergens enter our nasal passages or mouth, they interact with immune cells within our bodies. When this occurs, histamine and other allergic intermediaries are activated within our bloodstream. What is the result when one’s immune system is chronically weak? The agony known as seasonal allergies. This month we offer various ways of overcoming the symptoms of seasonal allergies without popular over-the-counter medications.

Over-the-counter medications are known in many cases to be marginally effective and often cause nasal irritation or drowsiness. Some popular nasal decongestant sprays have even been reported to cause headaches, nose bleeds, or permanent smelling / taste disturbances or loss.

First, Flush Regularly

Using a *neti pot* filled with saltwater is an easy and safe way to rinse away pollen or dust from your nasal passages and treat sinus congestion. This periodic flush not only clears nasal passages of allergens but also thins mucus buildup, making it easier to breath. Neti pots can be found at your local pharmacy.

Herbal Remedies

There are many herbal remedies that are very effective with no side effects. If you are taking any allergy medications, however, be sure to consult your doctor before taking these herbal remedies to assure there is no risk of interactions.

Butterbur, a European herb, has recently gotten much attention as a study in the *British Medical Journal* showed that taking one tablet of butterbur four times daily was just as effective in decreasing hay fever symptoms as the popular antihistamine drug, Allegra, without side effects. Later, a group of British researchers found that butterbur also was effective against symptoms of grass allergies such as itchy eyes and nasal swelling again without side effects.

A flavonoid named *quercetin* is found naturally in many foods, including apples, onions (especially red), citrus fruits, and green and black tea. Quercetin has known anti-inflammatory effects on the body and has been shown to block histamines. When taken in supplemental form, *quercetin* has been shown to reduce symptoms of allergies.

Stinging nettle has been shown to have a variety of health benefits, from arthritis relief to kidney and prostate problems, but also is commonly used for relief of hay fever. It can be found in many forms including supplemental or in herbal tea.

Look Inside Your Fridge

A supplement that I highly encourage nearly all my patients to take is a quality *omega-3 fish oil*. Why? In a recent German study, it was found that participants who regularly ate foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids or took a high quality omega-3 supplement, were significantly less likely to suffer allergy symptoms than those who did not. Sufficient levels of omega-3 fatty acids are vital in fighting off inflammation within the body that is a common foundation of nearly all disease. Omega-3s can be found in cold-water fish (especially salmon, sardines, anchovies, and krill), walnuts, flaxseed, eggs, and grass-fed meats.

Ready to get spicy? To help open your sinuses, add a dash of *horseradish, cayenne pepper, chili peppers, or hot mustard* to your dish. Not only are these proven decongestants but they all have significant individual health benefits.

Curcumin (turmeric) and *ginger root* are powerful antioxidants and also reduce nasal and sinus inflammation typical of many types of allergies.

Avoid These Foods

Many people are unaware of certain foods that actually increase mucus production. Limit your consumption of dairy, fruit juices (especially orange juice), wheat, beans, and processed foods.

Finally, Boost Your Immune System

Eating locally grown honey and consuming foods high in vitamin D such as egg yolks, cod liver oil, salmon, and herring are great ways to increase your immune function. Vitamin D consumption has also been linked to preventing many types of cancers, heart disease, Alzheimer's, and autoimmune diseases. Growing evidence suggests that vitamin D also helps protect against asthma and even, yes, allergies. Better than getting your vitamin D from these sources is allowing your body to synthesize its own by exposing it to sunlight at least 10 – 15 minutes per day.

Chiropractic adjustments and acupuncture have both been shown to help increase your immunity and decrease or even eliminate allergy symptoms. Finally, it is essential that you find ways to reduce your stress (such as practicing yoga or working out), drink plenty of clean water, and get plenty of sleep.

Sources: <http://www.motherearthnews.com>, www.webmd.com

Dr. Robert Mirandola is the owner of Allasso Chiropractic in Newtonville. He can be reached at 617.332.1877 or DrMirandola@allassochiro.com. To learn more, please visit our website at www.AllassoChiro.com.