

14 natural products to conquer spring allergies



Congratulations, survivors of Winter 2014! You've made it. The Freeze has lifted, but wait! A new menace threatens—Spring Allermageddon!

Soon spring blossoms will adorn our trees, and our cars and patios will be coated with a dusting of yellowish-green pollen.



For spring allergy sufferers, that means itchy, burning red eyes; scratchy throats; sneezing; wheezing; coughing; and sinus congestion.

Prescription and over-the-counter medications can suppress symptoms temporarily, but side effects abound, and they don't get to the root of the problem.

Before I list my favorite natural products for allergy, a couple of general caveats:

PASS ON THE PIZZA! When pollen comes on like gangbusters, your allergy "cup" runneth over, so to speak. Low-grade chronic allergies to dairy and gluten, often quiescent during the deep-freeze, may contribute to overload when seasonal

allergens make their appearance. Many of my patients report their allergy symptoms are better when they eliminate potential food allergens, and I find the same is true for me.

HOP ON THE WAGON! Beer, wine and liquor contain histamine, produced by yeast and bacteria during the fermentation process. If you're going to imbibe, clear distilled alcohols such as vodka and gin seem better-tolerated, but only in moderation.

GET SOME (REALLY) FRESH AIR! No, not the outdoors kind. Cloister yourself *inside* during the couple of weeks when spring pollens peak with the air conditioner on (provided its mechanical innards are mold- and dust-free) and consider getting a HEPA filter for your bedroom to pull indoor allergens out of circulation. And make sure air fresheners and detergent and fabric softener fragrances aren't adding to your nose woes.

BE BORN IN A MANGER! Maybe too late for you but interesting nonetheless: Studies show that kids who are born on farms and grow up playing in the dirt with animals have fewer allergies as they age.

OK, so here are my top 14 allergy-fighting products:

1) QUERCETIN: Known to inhibit mast cells from releasing pro-inflammatory compounds that cause allergy symptoms. Dosage: 500 mg 3 times daily.

2) BROMELAIN: A proteolytic enzyme extracted from pineapple, it stops the allergic cascade and reduces swelling and edema of tissue. Dosage: 500 mg 3 times daily.

3) URTICA DIOICA (Stinging Nettle): Randomized, double-blind studies have shown it to be as effective as standard allergy medications. Dosage: 200 mg 3 times daily.

4) NAC (N-acetyl cysteine): In Europe, it's a prescription

medicine, used for reducing congestion and for thinning tenacious mucus. Dosage: 200 mg 3 times daily.

(NOTE: A supplement called D-HIST, available in the Hoffman Center store, conveniently combines all four of the previous ingredients, plus vitamin C)

5) OMEGA-3 FISH OIL: EPA offers anti-inflammatory protection. Dosage: 1,000 mg 3 times daily.

6) VITAMIN C: Nature's own antihistamine. Dosage: 500 mg 3 times daily.

7) BUTTERBUR (Petadolex): Also a popular migraine remedy, good research supports its anti-leukotriene effects. European studies have shown it to be as effective as the popular allergy drug Zyrtec. Dosage: 50 mg 3 times daily.

8) PROBIOTICS: A recent study shows that a probiotic drink (Yakult) containing *Lactobacillus casei* relieves allergic symptoms. Restoring proper balance of bacteria in the GI tract helps to rein in over-exuberant immune responses.

9) PYCNOGENOL: One of the more well-studied of the natural bioflavonoids, this extract of French maritime pine bark was found to relieve allergic rhinitis symptoms. Dosage: 50-100 mg twice daily.

10) MSM (methylsulfonylmethane): May block allergic reactions at the tissue level. Dosage: 1 gram 3 times daily

11) ADRENAL SUPPORT: Since the adrenals mediate the body's resistance to allergic challenge, supporting cortisol production with licorice, pantothenic acid, adrenal cortical extract, ashwagandha and other adaptogens can relieve symptoms. Popular adrenal support supplements contain various proportions of these and other ingredients.

12) TRANSFER FACTOR: Allergies exemplify imbalanced immune responses; Transfer Factor from colostrum restores normal

TH1/TH2 ratios which enables the body to better distinguish between "friend" and "foe." Dosage: 250-500 mg twice daily

13) XLEAR: Bacteria and fungi that colonize the nasal passage and hide in biofilms are recognized as foreign invaders; their presence triggers chronic hyper-activation of the cells lining the respiratory tract. Xylitol in Xlear nasal spray inhibits microbes and dissolves biofilms, resulting in clearance of mucus.

14) SIMILISAN eye drops: A gentle homeopathic formula for itchy red eyes.

Get a jump on allergy season by starting supplementation early, before symptoms begin; stop the allergic cascade before it gets out of control!