



NATURAL ALLERGY RELIEF

A GUIDE TO MANAGING ALLERGIES

- ▶ THE COMMON CAUSES
- ▶ ALLERGIES & IMMUNITY
- ▶ TCM INSTEAD OF MEDS



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Life with Allergies: Medicating the Symptoms

Having a common cold is an uncomfortable experience. The symptoms of a cold include coughing, wheezing and congested breathing. Additionally, there is the pressure of a congested nose, sinus and the accompanying headaches with itchy and irritated eyes. Life with allergies in their most mild form involves dealing with similar symptoms every day.

Allergies do not take a vacation. Learning to cope with allergies can be frustrating. Some are born with allergies which emerge during childhood and then become milder over time in terms of the severity of allergic reaction. For some adults however, allergies can emerge for the first time in a noticeable way well after childhood and without any warning. It is important to understand that your body and its sensitivity to certain triggers may change several times over the course of your lifetime and while some old allergies may dissipate, new ones may emerge with mild to severe reaction.

For individuals with allergies, regular testing is a commonly recommended to monitor changes and to prevent health risks associated with severe allergic reaction.

What is life like with allergies? It depends on the type of allergy and the individual, as well as the environmental factors. There are a number of triggers which we will discuss that cause noticeable reactions for people who suffer from allergies but some of the reactions can include a variety of symptoms.

Among the physical conditions of allergic response there are a host of other secondary symptoms caused by over the counter (OTC) medications used to moderate some of the discomfort experienced during allergic reaction. These medications do a good job of temporarily relieving some of the symptoms, however, they contribute to a number of other problems for long term allergy sufferers.

Over the counter (non-prescription) options include allergy medications that can be administered as eye drops (to relieve irritation) nasal sprays and pills. Other types of allergy medications such as inhalers and oral medication typically require medical supervision and a doctor's prescription.

Common Allergy Symptoms:

- Nasal Congestion (Allergic Rhinitis)
- Coughing Laryngeal Edema
- Eczema
- Sinus Congestion (Allergic Sinusitis)
- Wheezing
- Sleep Apnea
- Hives (Urticaria)
- Eye Redness and Itching (Allergic Conjunctivitis)
- Dyspnea
- Chronic Inflammation
- Diarrhea
- Sneezing
- Asthma
- Ear Discomfort
- Vomiting

Antihistamines

The role of the antihistamine is to reduce or block histamine which is the chemical that is released by your body during an allergic reaction.

There are a number of different types of antihistamine administrations including oral (pills and in liquid form), nasal sprays (to reduce congestion) and eye drops. The discomfort of allergy symptoms can lead to the overuse of antihistamines.

Antihistamines only offer temporary relief, prompting individuals to continue to administer them over and over, sometimes exceeding the recommended usage warnings just to gain some symptom relief. Over time, this over usage may increase your risk for a number of health conditions and aggravated symptoms that meet or exceed the original symptoms of allergic reactions.

In other words, many allergy sufferers report that the cure is almost as bad as the disease when it comes to ameliorating allergy symptoms; however, given the amount of disruption that allergies can create it is no wonder that antihistamines are a popular choice. The problem is that long term use is neither healthy nor recommended by medical professionals. We will discuss why.

Medication Symptoms

- Oral antihistamines can cause dry mouth (thirst) and drowsiness. The sedating effects of oral antihistamines makes it difficult to focus and potentially hazardous to operate a vehicle or engage in certain activities which require focus and alertness.
- Nasal spray antihistamines do a good job of relieving sneezing, itchy or running nose and postnasal drip. The side effects of using antihistamine nasal sprays can include dizziness, drowsiness and fatigue and headache. Some sprays can also cause sore throat and nosebleeds.
- Eye drop antihistamines often accompany other prescriptions but can be recommended as over-the-counter (OTC) remedies to assist with itchy and watery eyes. After applying the drops, you can expect a few hours of relief before another dose is required. Some of the symptoms can include red eyes, stinging, mild burning and headaches. They are not recommended for use by patients with contact lenses as they increase the risk of eye inflammation.

Allergy sufferers rely on the use of antihistamines (over-the-counter and prescription) to moderate the discomfort of many symptoms of their chronic allergic reactions.

Unfortunately, use of the medications also creates secondary symptoms which can be equally disruptive to daily living. Certain types of antihistamines can have what is called an antimuscarinic effect, blocking receptors on the surface of

cells which can cause other problems including blurred vision, urine retention and other symptoms.

Decongestants

Medications with decongestant properties are frequently prescribed and purchased as over-the-counter medications for allergy sufferers. They are available in a variety of different delivery methods from oral tablets to liquid, eye drops and popular nasal sprays.

During an allergic reaction the cells and tissue in your nasal passage may swell in response to contact with the trigger allergen. In the eyes, blood vessels can also swell, (comma) causing redness. How does the decongestant work? It shrinks those swollen tissues and blood vessels relieving the pressure while also helping to reduce mucus production and overall congestion.

Medication Symptoms

- Long term use of nasal spray decongestants is speculated to actually worsen the symptoms of nasal inflammation and irritation. Nasal sprays are not recommended for long term use but given the fast-acting nature of the relief, they are frequently misused as over-the-counter products.
- They can, over time, contribute to high blood pressure and are not recommended for regular use for patients who have abnormal blood pressure or glaucoma.
- Some studies have suggested that long term use of decongestants can cause insomnia, mood disorders (irritability) and issues with the function of the urinary tract.

Again, as with other methods of relieving symptoms of allergies, the use of decongestants comes with a barrage of other health concerns and impacts and can, in some cases, worsen the severity of symptoms for the patient.

Corticosteroid Use

The use of steroids is less common but an option for many physicians to remedy severe and debilitating symptoms of allergic reaction as they are very effective at reducing inflammation. Steroids can be deployed in a number of forms, i.e., oral tablets, liquids or even fast-acting inhalers and nasal sprays.

Doctors are a little more hesitant to prescribe steroids as they have a number of negative medication interactions (with other prescription medications) as well as side effects and symptoms. It is a concern as steroids must be taken frequently in order to be effective (often daily) which means that patients using corticosteroids to moderate allergy symptoms can anticipate one or more significant and noticeable side effects from the medication.

Medication Symptoms

- Weight gain is a common side effect from using corticosteroids and it is also associated with water retention and high blood pressure.
- Studies have discussed a link between steroids and the thinning of the bones or osteoporosis and muscle weakness. If taken by younger individuals it has the potential to limit growth with long term use.
- Steroids in some instances have been linked to the development of Diabetes and cataracts of the eyes.

For people with allergies the choices are never a winning outcome. The first option is to cope with the symptoms of allergies and try to work around feeling unwell with headaches, sneezing and difficulty breathing every day. That is not much of an option for the average person who would like to remain more productive throughout the day.

Feeling unwell makes everything harder including focus and concentration on important tasks as well as maintaining energy throughout the week.

One of the most common complaints by allergy sufferers is the prevailing sense of fatigue or drowsiness which can make them feel less engaged, alert and interested in activities. This lack of energy can be similar to the symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome, which can make even the most simple and straightforward tasks more difficult.

For others in special fields such as medical services and transport or other technical occupations, that lack of alertness can create disruptions to their productivity and safety. It is more than just an inconvenience and discomfort for those with allergies, but a significant health issue that creates a significant impediment to their quality of life and day to day functioning.

While there is no shortage of over-the-counter remedies to help moderate symptoms of allergies there are few products that work to stop the allergic reaction before it begins.

Allergic Rhinitis and Snoring

Approximately 10 to 25% of Americans are impacted by Allergic Rhinitis. It is the allergic inflammation of the nasal airway which creates pressure and discomfort for allergy sufferers.

Pollen and other typical allergens including dander and dust are inhaled and produce the IgE (antibody immunoglobulin) which binds to the mast cells that produce histamine and other inflammatory chemicals. Once irritated, the result is sneezing, itchy and watery eyes and swelling of the nasal passages.



The Anatomy of an Allergic Reaction: What Happens Inside Your Body?

What happens when your body is exposed to an allergen? Understanding how allergic reactions occur can help patients to reduce the number of environmental triggers that create mild to moderate responses and symptoms. Allergies may simply feel like sneezing, a running nose or itchy and watery eyes but those symptoms are the result of a complex chain reaction of events inside your body that present those signs of discomfort.

Allergies actually begin at the genetic level in the immune system. The immune system is on a constant level of vigilance, and it monitors everything that your body comes into contact with.

When it encounters something like pollen (or a specific organic compound in a food we are allergic to) our immune system identifies that allergen as a health threat. When your immune system goes into 'high alert' it creates anti-bodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE) which travel to cells throughout the body and trigger a release of chemicals that cause the allergic reaction.

Within seconds of coming into contact with an allergy your body declares war on the allergen almost as though it was an enemy invader. Think of the IgE as a built-in alarm at the cellular level which puts every cell in your body on 'high alert'. The chemicals that sound the alarm are called cytokines.

So, what causes your immune system to sound the alarm after detecting certain chemicals or allergens? Researchers aren't entirely sure, but what they do know is that more than 50 million Americans suffer from allergies from a variety of different triggers and there appears to be a hereditary link. Did one or more of your parents suffer from allergies? If so, you have a greater risk of developing allergies.

Types of Allergens and Triggers: Understanding the Culprits

Where in your home do allergens wait to create those uncomfortable symptoms that you hate? The truth is that allergens can be found everywhere; at work, outside or at home. Anywhere you go you have a probability of encountering allergens that your body will react to.

For most people, regular allergy testing helps to pinpoint the types of allergens that they should be watching for. However, in some cases, you may be allergic to something without realizing it until you have a moderate to severe allergic reaction or until you are tested.

Here are some of the more common sources of allergens.

- Fruit
- Soy
- Insect Sting
- Nickel
- Garlic
- Tree Nut
- Mold
- Gold Oats
- Wheat
- Perfume
- Chromium
- Meat
- Gluten
- Cosmetics
- Cobalt
- Milk
- Egg
- Latex
- Formaldehyde
- Peanut Sulfites
- Water
- Toner
- Fish / Shellfish
- Pollen
- Dust Mites

Some prescription medications are also known to be allergens while other prescription medications are known to cause allergic sensitivity after long term use.

Prescription Allergy Triggers

- Tetracycline
- Local anesthetics
- Sulfonamides
- I.V. contrast dye
- Dilantin
- Tegretol
- Penicillin
- Cephalosporins
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories

Testing for allergies should be conducted on an annual basis to monitor for chemical and natural immune sensitivities. Consult your physician to monitor any changes in sensitivity and keep a log of any new reactions.

Some prescriptions drugs are known to commonly trigger allergy symptoms and include anticonvulsants, insulin, iodinated dye, sulfa drugs and cephalosporins.



Allergies and Your Immune System

Allergies are due to an overreaction of your immune system to every day natural substances such as dust, mites, pets, pollens and other sources found in food. The symptoms for allergy sufferers are so significant that relief is necessary to carry on even the most basic functions of daily living. Most allergy medications and treatments suppress the body's reaction and release of histamine with prescription drugs, oral medications and over-the-counter (OTC) sprays and tablets. But these temporary 'fixes' do not address the underlying immunological causes of allergies nor do they help to reduce the instances of disruptive and uncomfortable allergic reactions

As an alternative to allergy medications, look for an allergy supplement formulated with Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). For hundreds of years TCM has provided symptomatic relief of allergies with a combination of natural ingredients. The traditional Chinese ingredients listed here provide a natural anti-inflammatory effect. Rather than just suppress allergic reactions, they address the root cause of allergies.

1. Ginseng

Quality derived ginseng has a number of advantageous biological activities in vivo including anti-apoptotic (prevents cell death), antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. In support of its anti-allergic activity, ginseng inhibits the production of IgE and subsequent release of histamine in studies. The administration of ginseng reduces the expression of the allergic cytokine IL-4 and promotes the expression of the regulatory gene FoxP3.



2. Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae)



You may have heard of Gan Cao referred to as Licorice Root. It is commonly used in Chinese medicine and over-the-counter applications to moisten the lung and suppress coughing. By softening phlegm in the air ways, it makes it easier to dispel,

reducing congestion faster and more efficiently in the bronchial and nasal paths.

Glycyrrhizin has a variety of health benefits attributed to its anti-inflammatory properties. It has been shown to be effective at reducing the production of TH2 polarizing cytokine IL-4 and allergy associated IgE antibody isotype in vivo and the release of histamine containing granules in vitro. Glycyrrhizin improves the antioxidant status and reduces free radicals according to research experiments with allergic rhinitis.

3. Bai Guo Ye (Folium Ginkgo)

This powerful Chinese herb is used to aid in circulation and improve focus, alertness and cognitive functioning. It is also commonly used to treat dizziness, vertigo and tinnitus. You may have heard it referred to as Ginkgo Biloba which has been used in traditional Chinese Medicine to reduce the severity of asthmatic symptoms while reducing itchy and watery eyes.



4. Suan Zao Ren (Ziziphi Spinosae)

Derived from the spine date seed, this herbal extract has been used to replenish the liver and promote the production of bodily fluid and hydration. Zizyphus can inhibit the release of histamine while (according to studies) demonstrating neurological properties that promote calmness.



5. Wu Mei (Fructus Mume)

This extract (Mume Fruit) has therapeutic benefits in models of ulcerative colitis and inhibits the production of inflammatory cytokines. Mume fruit has also been shown to reduce the symptoms of atopic dermatitis.



6. Rice Bran

It has been reported to have anti-inflammatory effects through down-regulating the inflammatory transcription factor NF-kB. This leads to the reduction of inflammatory enzymes such as COX-2 and iNOS and pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-1, IL-6 and TNF-a.



Managing Your Symptoms: Tips for Breathing Easier with Allergies

Life with allergies can feel a little unmanageable sometimes, leaving allergy sufferers with two choices: the symptoms or the side effects of traditional over-the-counter or prescription medications. There are a number of things that you can do at home and in your daily activities to help reduce the load of allergens in your environment and manage your triggers for better health, comfort and wellness.

Around the Home

There are many things you can change in your home to create a healthier environment for those with allergies.

- Dust mites are harmless to most people, but their droppings are a strong trigger for an allergic reaction for people who suffer sensitivities. Since it is impossible to completely remove dust from your home, consider reducing the amount of dust in areas where you spend a great deal of time.
- In the bedroom, consider wrapping both your mattress and your box spring with a dust mite resistant fabric to prevent accumulation in your mattress. The mattress is one of the highest allergen laden furnishings in your home.
- Invest in hypoallergenic bedding and use perfume free laundry detergent for sheets, pillowcases and comforters. Consider investing in a cover for your comforter which can be removed and washed weekly to avoid a buildup of allergens on your linens
- Keep the windows closed and use an air filter in the bedroom to reduce the amount of airborne pollen that enters the room for a better night's sleep.
- Take shoes off at the front door to reduce the amount of pollen tracked into the house. Jackets and outer wear should be left near the front door. Sporting equipment should be stored outside the living area in a garage or basement.

Life with Pets and Allergies

Are you a pet owner and an allergy sufferer? Many people with allergies are willing to endure some of the symptoms involved in sharing a life with their domestic dogs, cats or other pets.

If living "pet free" isn't an option (because let's face it, they are part of the family) there are still a number of things that you can do to reduce the allergen load of your pets and help everyone breathe a little easier.

- Choose a short haired dog or cat to reduce the number of allergens trapped in the fur.
- Keep dogs and cats out of your bedroom. Since you spend a great deal of time sleeping in your bedroom, try to keep that area a low allergen zone.
- Wash your pets at least once a week to remove dander, pollen and dust from their fur and to prevent them from transferring those allergens to other soft surfaces and furnishings in the home.
- Consider using disposable pet wipes that remove dander and allergens in between washing.
- Always brush your pets often and outdoors, to avoid the spread of fur, pollen and dander inside the home.
- Wash soft surface pet equipment, such as leashes and stuffed toys once per month with a mild hypoallergenic detergent.

Life with allergies should not hold you back from enjoying your favorite activities, or from spending time with family and friends outdoors. The choices you make every day can help you breathe easier by reducing your exposure to allergy triggers, while still enjoying the things you love most in life.



Spending Time Outdoors

A bright sunny day with green grass is pleasant to just about everyone except an allergy sufferer. Whether participating in sports, recreation or simply travelling during daily business the moment an individual with allergies steps outside their front door they are at war with a host of natural allergens and triggers.

Since avoiding the outdoors entirely is not a probability there are a number of things that can be done to reduce exposure, such as choosing clothing that is hypoallergenic.

When returning home, make it a habit to take a shower and change your clothing to avoid depositing additional allergens inside the home. Investing in quality air filtration will help remove airborne dust, dander and pollen and improve indoor air quality.

Dining Out with Allergies

Food allergies can escalate quickly into a life-threatening situation depending on the severity of your response. When eating out, always choose restaurants that disclose the types of allergens that your food may have come into contact with.

Since peanut allergies are very serious and common, most restaurants will disclose if their kitchen contains peanuts. Serious food allergies can be triggered by contact with beverages or utensils even if you do not order a meal. Use extra precaution when eating out.

Allergies in the Workplace

The concept of being allergic to your workplace (or coworkers) may seem like an entertaining concept but for many people the workplace can be full of uncontrolled allergens which make them feel unwell.

The term “sick building syndrome” refers to the frequency with which indoor environments can be higher in triggers for a variety of reasons that stem from poor air circulation to cleaning agents, building materials (fiberglass) and mold.

Some professions are more prone to workplace allergens such as industrial workers, who handle paints, chemicals, plastics and solvents. Agricultural workers can experience a wide host of chemical and organic allergens including animal dander, pollen, pesticides and fertilizers. Medical workers can become allergic to surgical gloves and develop an allergy to latex, while bakers can develop rhinitis due to flour or wheat allergies.

It is important to note that some allergies can worsen over time and lead to chronic inflammation which can become something more than an irritant and grow into a significant health concern.

If you are employed in a field where your exposure to allergens is high, you will need to make some choices with regards to your overall health and well-being and pursue workplace modifications (such as telecommuting or working from home) where possible. Try to identify the allergens and reduce your exposure to them.

Monitor Your Allergy Symptoms with Our Score Sheet

It can be helpful to track your allergy symptoms. Measure the impact of trying any new product by using our Symptom Score Sheet to monitor your progress.

Allergy Symptom (1= no symptoms 10 = severe symptoms)	Day One Score 1 to 10	Day Thirty Score 1 to 10
Nasal Congestion		
Clogged Ears		
Sense of Smell		
Headaches		
Post Nasal Drip		
Hives		
Itching		
Itchy / Watery Eyes		
Nasal Discharge (Mucus)		
Dizziness		
Coughing		
Wheezing		
Lightheadedness		
Fatigue		
Muscle Aches		
Eczema		
Dark Circles Under Eyes		
Skin Rash		
Mood Change (Irritability)		
Attention Span		
Memory		
Mental Clarity		
Diarrhea		
Nausea / Vomiting		

