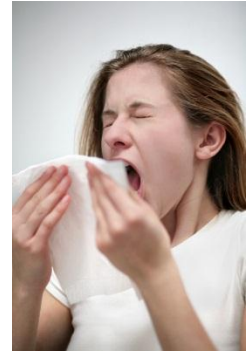


Allergies: First of a three part series

An **allergy** is the exaggerated response of the immune system to a foreign substance, or allergen. These substances can range from pollens or molds to particular foods, chemical additives, drugs, animal dander and many additional irritants. When a person first comes into contact with an allergen, the immune system responds by creating specific defense molecules called antibodies. If a person is sensitive to an allergen, the antibodies activate or “put on alert” specialized immune cells called mast cells. On subsequent contact with the allergen, the mast cells react by releasing histamine, a defensive substance that causes rashes or swelling of the skin or mucous membranes, as well as narrowing or inflammation of the airways.



The body’s response is an array of **symptoms which include nasal congestion, drainage, sneezing, coughing, itchy eyes, nose, and roof of the mouth or throat.**

These hypersensitive reactions can be aggravated by a compromised immune system, food additives and preservatives, environmental pollutants, dust and molds, use of medicinal and recreational drugs, and stress. There are several organs and body systems that are recruited in this allergic cascade: Liver, Lymphatic System, Thymus gland, tonsils, spleen, bone marrow. Support of these organs is crucial in minimizing the body’s allergic reaction.

What you can do to help relieve allergy symptoms:

- **Reduce dairy intake;** dairy products can inhibit breathing and increase mucus production.
- **Homeopathy** can readjust the immune system and alleviate symptoms
- **Acupuncture** extremely helpful in restoring the immune system and relieving allergies.

Acupuncture and homeopathic consultations and treatments are available with Dr. Ray. Call to schedule an appointment.

Some of favorite allergy remedies:

Quercetin+Nettles | Designs for Health : Quercetin is used for its anti-histamine and anti-inflammatory properties. Nettle leaf has anti-inflammatory actions.

SyAllgen Homeopathic Nasal Spray | Syntriion: For temporary relief of nasal congestion due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies. It decongests nasal passages, temporarily restores freer breathing through the nose, and promotes nasal drainage.

HistaEze is designed to help support and counteract some of the main symptoms and immune reactions associated with environmental allergies.

<http://www.motheearthnews.com/Natural-Health/2006-08-01/Six-Natural-Allergy-Remedies.aspx?page=2>

Here are more things that can help head off allergies before they start, as well as some drug-free ways to treat symptoms when they do arise.

Neti Pots. What could be simpler than rinsing away allergens with saltwater? Neti pots, small vessels shaped like Aladdin's lamp (see the Image Gallery), have been used in India for thousands of years to flush the sinuses and keep them clear. It's an idea that takes some getting used to for most Westerners, but it's a bit like using nasal spray. A little douse of saltwater can rinse away those prickly pollen grains and help treat allergies and other forms of sinus congestion.

Just last year, an Italian study published in the *International Archives of Allergy and Immunology* found that nasal flushing was a mild and effective way to treat seasonal allergies in children, and markedly reduced their use of antihistamines.

You could simply use your cupped hand instead of a neti pot to rinse sinuses, but netis are inexpensive, and many people find them much easier to use. To flush your sinuses, mix a quarter to a half teaspoon of noniodized table salt into a cup of lukewarm water and pour it into the pot. (You can adjust the amount of salt, depending on what feels most comfortable.) Lean over a sink with your head slightly cocked to one side, then put the spout of the neti into one nostril and allow the water to drain out the other nostril. Use about half of the solution, then repeat on the other side, tilting your head the opposite way. Gently blow out each nostril to clear them completely. Neti pots are widely available online and at natural food stores. Use your pot about twice a day during allergy season, especially in the morning and after spending time outdoors. You also can use a neti pot before bed to prevent snoring caused by allergies and promote optimal overnight breathing.

Quercetin. A natural plant-derived compound called a bioflavonoid, quercetin helps stabilize mast cells and prevents them from releasing histamine. Quercetin also is a natural antioxidant that helps mop up molecules called free radicals that cause cell damage, which can lead to cancer. **Citrus fruits, onions, apples, parsley, tea, tomatoes, broccoli, lettuce and wine are**

naturally high in quercetin, but allergy sufferers will most likely need to use supplements to build up enough of this compound to prevent attacks. The recommended dosage is about 1,000 milligrams a day, taken between meals. It's best to start treatment six weeks before allergy season. Those with liver disease shouldn't use quercetin, so please consult your doctor before using this or any other supplement — especially if you are pregnant or nursing.

Allergy-Fighting Foods. A German study, published in the journal *Allergy*, found that participants who **ate foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids were less likely to suffer allergy symptoms than those who didn't regularly eat these foods. Omega-3s help fight inflammation and can be found in cold-water fish, walnuts and flaxseed oil, as well as grass-fed meat and eggs.**

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To help keep airways clear when pollen counts are high, add a dash of horseradish, chili peppers or hot mustard to your food — all act as natural, temporary decongestants. It's also a good idea to avoid foods that you're slightly allergic to until the air clears. Fighting off allergies can render the body hypersensitive to those foods, causing more severe reactions than usual.

Stinging Nettle. If you decide you need an **antihistamine but want a natural option**, stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) behaves in much the same way as many of the drugs sold to treat allergies, but without the unwanted side effects of dry mouth and drowsiness. Nettle actually inhibits the body's ability to produce histamine. It's a common weed in many parts of the United States, but the most practical medicinal form is a freeze-dried extract of the leaves sold in capsules. Studies have shown that taking about 300 milligrams daily will offer relief for most people, although the effects may last only a few hours. You also can make your own tinctures or teas with stinging nettle. (Contact with the stinging hairs on fresh nettle can cause skin

inflammation, so wear protective gloves when handling it.) For more on making your own herbal remedies, see Richo Cech's *Making Plant Medicine* (Horizon Herbs, 2000).

Butterbur. Derived from a common weed in Europe, butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) is another alternative to antihistamines, though it may be hard to find in the United States. In the days before refrigeration, its broad, floppy leaves were used to wrap butter during warm spells, hence the name butterbur. A Swiss study, published in *British Journal of Medicine*, found that butterbur was as effective as the drug cetirizine, the active ingredient in Zyrtec. Even though cetirizine is supposed to be a nonsedative antihistamine, researchers reported that it did cause drowsiness, though butterbur did not. Participants in the study took 32 milligrams of butterbur a day, divided into four doses. A word of caution though — butterbur is in the same family as ragweed, so it could worsen allergy symptoms in some cases. Effects of taking butterbur over a long period of time also are unknown.

Sublingual Immunotherapy. Specific immunotherapy, otherwise known as allergy shots, has been used widely to inject patients with diluted doses of certain allergens to help build immunity over time. However, allergy shots can take three to five years to be effective, and a small percentage of people suffer severe reactions to this treatment. Though it remains popular in North America, the practice fell out of favor in the United Kingdom during the late 1980s, when strict limitations were imposed after several adverse reactions occurred.

10 All-Natural Allergy Remedies

Ease seasonal sniffing and sneezing with these time-tested methods

By Barbara Brody

<http://www.womansday.com/health-fitness/conditions-diseases/10-all-natural-allergy-remedies-106253>

1. Saline Nasal Rinse

This is one remedy that both Eastern and Western docs (like your allergist) will likely agree on. Basically all you're doing is flushing out your sinuses with a saltwater solution, which can help wash away allergens and irritants. To do it, grab a Neti Pot or a large squeeze bottle, like the one made by NeilMed, and fill it with a premixed packet of saline solution (available at drugstores) or make your own solution. To mix it yourself, combine 1 quart of distilled or boiled (then cooled) water; 2 to 3 tsp non-iodized salt (kosher, pickling, canning or sea salt); and 1 tsp baking soda. Put about 8 oz at a time in the Neti Pot or squeeze bottle and tilt your head forward over the sink while you pour/squeeze the solution in one nostril and let it drain out the other. "I tell patients to pant like a puppy, which lifts the palate and closes off the back of the

nose so you don't get that drowning sensation," says Sezelle Gereau Haddon, MD, an attending otolaryngologist at the Beth Israel Medical Center Department of Integrative Medicine in New York City.

2. Cool-Mist Humidifier

You might be tempted to pack up the humidifier now that spring is here, but hold off, recommends John Salerno, DO, a family practitioner at Patients Medical holistic wellness center in New York City. "When it's still a little cool at night and indoor humidity is low, using a cool-mist humidifier can help get allergens out of the air," he explains. "Water droplets bind to the allergens, and they get heavy and fall to the floor so you don't inhale them."

3. Air Purifier with a HEPA Filter

Using a HEPA filter—especially in the bedroom—is the best way to remove spores and pollen from the air, says Dr. Salerno. Not sure which brand to buy? He likes [Austin Air](#), but also suggests checking out the latest air purifier reviews from [Consumer Reports](#).

4. Steam Inhalation

Congested? Dr. Haddon suggests inhaling the steam of essential oils (available at health food stores). She shared this "recipe," which was given to her by Dale Bellisfeld, RN, AHG: Fill a saucepan with water and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat, take the pan off the stovetop and add 3 drops eucalyptus essential oil, 3 drops rosemary essential oil, 2 drops myrtle essential oil and 2 drops tea tree essential oil. Tent a bath towel over the saucepan (keep your face just far enough away from the steam to avoid burns) and inhale deeply for 5 to 10 minutes. Repeat 1 to 3 times a day.

5. Probiotics

You probably associate probiotics—a.k.a. “good” bacteria, like that found in plain yogurt—with digestion, but they also play a role in keeping your immune system well balanced. Since not all strains of probiotics are beneficial for the same thing, Dr. Haddon recommends choosing brands that contain *Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG*, *Bifidobacterium lactis* and *Acidophilus*. She likes Pro-5 by [Klaire Labs](#).

6. Honey

Dr. Haddon admits there isn't as much science behind this one, but there are no side effects, either. Many of her patients swear that eating local honey (produced near where they live) really works. “The bees eat the pollen that's in your region of the country, then they produce the honey and you consume that, so it's kind of like a mini allergy shot,” she says.

7. Quercetin

This substance, which is found in the skin of onions and apples, is a natural antihistamine, says Lynne David, ND, a naturopathic doctor and Chinese medicine practitioner at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, DC. You can take it by itself (300 mg 3 times a day during peak allergy season without food), or in a combination product like [NOW](#), which also includes bromelain (from pineapple; also beneficial for allergies). Dr. Salerno recommends a similar combo product, [Aller-C](#), which contains quercetin, bromelain and vitamin C. And Dr. Haddon likes [Natural D-Hist](#), which contains quercetin, stinging nettle leaf, bromelain and N-Acetyl L-Cysteine (an amino acid that helps thin mucus). All these supplements are relatively safe, but check with your doctor first to make sure they don't interact with other medications you're taking (antidepressants and thyroid meds in particular may cause a problem).

8. Stinging Nettle Leaf

This herb, found in many of the combo allergy products noted above, can also be taken by itself

in tea form, says Dr. Haddon. To make sure you get enough of the medicinal oils, pour boiling water over the tea bag and cover the cup for 15 minutes to let the oils seep in before drinking.

9. Homeopathic Treatments

Homeopathy uses very diluted amounts of herb and flower essences. Dr. David recommends two homeopathic remedies (taken orally; you let the tiny tablets dissolve under your tongue) for allergies: *Euphrasia*, which is especially good for burning, itchy eyes; and *Allium cepa*, which is good for a drippy nose. She suggests trying one at a time (rather than together) to see which one might work for you.

10. Acupuncture

Although it's not exactly clear why, acupuncture may help alleviate allergy symptoms—especially if you start treatment about a month before peak season. Dr. Salerno says it's possible that stimulating some of the meridians (channels through which energy flows) may help to temper an overactive immune system that can lead to bad allergy symptoms.

Read more: [Natural Allergy Remedies - How to Treat Allergies Naturally - Woman's Day](#)

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