*Breathing Freer & Staying Healthy through the Pollen Season*

“My seasonal allergies are driving me crazy!!! Is there anything I can do?” is an all too common frustration that I hear in the spring & summer. Actually there are many things you can do to breathe more freely and have some quality of life during the hay days of pollen production. Are you ready for some healthier alternatives to allergy medications taken daily, to suppress your unmanageable allergic histamine responses?

Many of us take for granted that we can comfortably breathe year round but for others, the welcoming warmth of spring’s sunshine stimulates a full orchestra of pollens stepping up their dissemination everywhere, wreaking havoc on those who are allergic to specific pollens. Some conifers, alder wood, & birch pollens are some of the worst offenders in the spring, with grass pollens following in June and ragweed in the late summer.

What really works when you are in crisis mode with an allergy flare up? I will provide you with some tangible answers to that throughout this article. Let’s look first at what causes so much inflammatory responses. When you are exposed to allergens such as dust, mold, specific pollens, animal dander & even certain foods, your immune system kicks into action. Histamine is:

* responsible for many allergic responses in your body /mind
* Are liberally distributed within your lungs, sinuses, brain, and digestive tract.

As an allergy acupuncturist there are practical strategies that can help your body responds healthfully to allergens. Read on to discover simple & deeper rooted solutions to spring, summer, & fall pollens.

*Reduce Your Exposure:* You may want to limit your exposure outdoors when pollen counts are highest. These times are early mornings & evenings or on sunny warm days.

*NAET Allergy Desensitizing*: This healing modality addresses the underlying core issues, reprogrammingthe body/mind that has misinterupted dust, pollen, and common foods to be an intruder to the body’s defense systems. Allergy desensitizing treatments resets programs in the mind, reacclimating long standing allergens to become friend, not foe; in other words *to reclaim them as normal substances in the body.*

In the case of pollen reactivity, local pollens are collected on a wet towel. Each patient is tested & treated with these samples, given customized *desensitizing* treatments to pollen, grasses, and weeds that they breathe and are exposed to locally. This energetic form of medicine is revolutionary in its approach, providing long lasting results for allergy prevention care *for over 30 years now.*

*Reduce histamine reactions in your body:* Bioflavonoids & quercetin are both members of the Vitamin C family and are helpful aides in stabilizing the mast cells, so they don’t flood your tissues with histamine production. Keep in mind that excess histamines are the troublemakers that make your lungs, nose, & eyes to itch & swell up, creating runny noses.

 If you’re challenged with pollen reactivity, it would be worth your time with being muscle tested, to see if you are absorbing vitamin C efficiently. In my clinical practice, I’ve observed 90 % of my patients with acute & chronic seasonal allergy reactions to be *challenged with vitamin C assimilation, which is essential to healthy immune functions.* More efficient assimilation of *Vitamin* C is one of the first treatments that I do to seasonal allergy sufferers in aiding the body/ mind to reacclimatize to foreign proteins, like pollen.

*Quercetin & D-Hist:* are well researched bioflavonoids that reduce histamine reactions. To make sizable dents in the overproduction of histamines, quercetin needs to be consumed regularly during the pollen season. You’ll find several capsulated quercetin products at your local health food stores or Super Supplement on line. One of the very best of the quercetin herbal products is called D-Hist offered in a capsule form for adults or chewable for children. It works as an alternative to the drowsy producing antihistamines during the worst of the pollen reactivity. Unfortunately this great allergy aide cannot be purchased in a health food store but your naturopath or acupuncturist can order it. The company recommends purchasing the larger 120 capsule bottle for $32, which is enough to get you through a month. Dosage requires some adjusting for the first 2 weeks to get the overproduction of histamines under control. Routine dosage is 3 caps 3 times a day for the first 2 weeks and then dropping down to 2-3 caps two times a day. If you are utilizing this herbal product in a chewable form for children, it is half the strength of the capsule form. Consult your acupuncturist or naturopath doctor for a customized dosage that’s suitable for you.

*“NAC” – commonly known as N-acetylcysteine:* is one of the most potent anti- oxidants in the body. When taken orally, it has the ability to thin mucus & makes it easier for the body to assimilate it. NAC is known for reducing airway inflammation in the lungs.

Netti Pot Irrigation or Saline Nasal Sprays: Many of you are already familiar with daily nasal douching to gently flush pollens out of your nasal passages. Flushing with distilled or sterile water (1 cup to ¼ tsp salt) thins out accumulated mucus that otherwise holds onto allergens in the sinuses. Clogged nasal cavities serve as a breeding ground for respiratory viruses and bacteria. I recommend adding a small amount of golden seal or echinacea in the sweetened glycerin form rather not the alcohol base. Both of these herbs have anti- bacterial and anti-viral properties.

Dietary Changes: Avoid foods that you know you are sensitive to. During the heavy months of pollen production is when you want to be more cautionary with eating foods that aggravate your immune system as *you are putting a double load on your body’s immune system.* Acute sinusitis or asthma flare-ups can coincide when the pollen count is highest tied in when you are consuming foods that you are not digesting well or you may not be aware that you are food sensitive to. You can be tested by a naturopathic doctor through a blood workup for environmental allergies and food sensitivities. Common foods that many allergy sensitive individuals can be reactive to are dairy products, sugar, citrus fruit, wheat & gluten grains, soy, MSG, corn and artificial sweeteners.

*Other Potential Helpful Treatments*: Stinging nettle, a common herb found along streams is effective in a freeze dried, tincture or tea form when taken 3-4 times a day. Nettle has both anti-inflammatory and anti-histamine properties. It is best to start taking nettle herbs 1-2 months before the pollen count gets high. Similarly, raw honey that is cultivated by bees from your local area is another remedy to desensitize you to spring, summer & fall pollens. Consuming bee pollen or honey from the comb is best consumed daily a couple of months before the spring pollens become reactive.

*Acupuncture & Chinese Herbs Used Together:* Some Chinese herbs are very effective in addressing the acute symptoms & others work more for the root cause of chronic sinusitis & allergic responses. Raw, freeze dried or patent herbs are utilized during the allergy season. Please consult a licensed acupuncturist/Chinese herbalist to discern what herbal formulas can be tailored to your seasonal allergy challenges.

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