

Breathe Easy: Herbal Remedies for Seasonal Allergies

Spring and summer, the seasons of congestion, sneezing and itchy watery eyes, do not have to be a miserable time of coping with allergies. You can enjoy the changing seasons by bringing allergy and hay fever symptoms under control. Often considered a flaw in immune system activity, allergies may be intensified in individuals with an impaired immune system. Allergens can produce excess histamine, which can provoke severe reactions and irritation in your nose, eyes and throat, redness and inflammation of the mucous membranes, sinus congestion, even rashes and fatigue. Prevention is the best medicine: strengthening and supporting the immune system is the key for minimizing allergy symptoms.

Bioflavonoids, found in the white peel under the rind of citrus fruits, in berries, buckwheat, kale, garlic, green tea and onions, can aid allergy sufferers in controlling symptoms. There are many types of Bioflavonoids, such as rutin, hesperidin and quercetin, however one particular bioflavonoid offers dramatic protection from the allergy response. Known as THE allergy supplement, Quercetin is used to inhibit both the manufacture and the release of histamine. Because bioflavonoids support immune system function, they are an excellent supplement for individuals with HIV and AIDS related illness. For allergy sufferers, the therapeutic adult dose of Quercetin is between 750-1500 mg taken throughout the day. To enhance absorption of this well tolerated supplement, combine it with Bromelain, a digestive enzyme from pineapple. Bromelain also contains anti-inflammatory properties that enhance the activity of Quercetin.

Among herbal remedies used for allergies, the anti catarrhal properties of Elderflowers (*Sambucus nigra*) make it an ideal remedy for nasal congestion, throat inflammation and bronchial conditions. Elderflower can be prepared as a tea and drunk or gargled for symptoms of a sore throat. High in vitamin C and flavinoids, it is used for the common cold and winter chills.

The dried leaves and flowers of Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*) are anti-inflammatory and anti catarrhal and contain antiseptic properties to the mucous membranes and upper respiratory tract. The herbs can be combined together in equal parts and prepared as a medicinal tea. For allergy relief, consume three to four cups of tea daily. Peppermint leaves can be added to enhance the taste.

You can also try steaming with essential oils to relieve allergy symptoms. When in contact with foreign pathogens, our sinuses increase production of mucous. Essential oils such as Eucalyptus, Pine, Niaouli and Lavender contain anti bacterial and anti inflammatory properties and they contain volatile oils that are antiseptic to mucous membranes lining the nasal and sinus passages. Never take essential oils internally, instead place a few drops in a humidifier or in a basin of hot water, then cover your head and inhale the fragrant vapors. Take care not to burn yourself on the water or hot steam. An almost forgotten home remedy, steaming is one of the best ways to treat upper respiratory infections and sinus congestion.

Finally, avoid dairy products, which can increase the body's mucous production. Consume hot lemon drinks with a dash of cayenne pepper to help decrease excess mucous production. Garlic, onions, horseradish are also useful medicinal foods for clearing up sinus congestion.

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Published in the March/April 2004 issue of Living (+), a publication of the BC Persons With Aids Society. www.bcpwa.org

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