

Hay fever *help*

Spring has sprung! It's the season for smelling flowers and relaxing in the grass. However for some it's the time to protect yourself from perilous pollens. Naturopath **Caroline Robertson** explains how.

Something in the air

Suffering from sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, itchiness, congestion or fatigue? Join the hay fever club along with 20 per cent of Australians. Also known as allergic rhinitis, this irritating condition is aggravated by pollens, dust, mould, mites or animal hair. In an allergic reaction impotent particles are tagged harmful by a hypersensitive immune system. Next mast cells release IgE antibodies initiating an allergic response. Pharmaceutical anti-histamines can temporarily suppress symptoms but they have side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness and dry mouth. For a natural approach shoo allergies away with diet, herbs, homeopathics, supplements and lifestyle changes.

An onion a day

An onion a day cured one client of chronic

hay fever. Adjusting food can reduce and even eradicate allergic symptoms. First, cut out mucus-producing foods to clear sticky surfaces that allergens love to live in. These foods include dairy,



Hayfever, also known as allergic rhinitis, is an irritating condition aggravated by pollens, dust, mould, mites or animal hair and affects up to 20 per cent of Australians.

starches, sugar, bananas and gluten. Food allergens can irritate also. Common ones to consider are soya, salicylates, corn and peanuts. Cleanse with periodic fasting, juices or soups, helping the

body to breakdown and abolish mucus and toxins. Incorporate vitamin C and flavonoid-rich foods to fortify your tissues and soothe inflammation. These natural anti-histamines include apples, berries, broccoli, buckwheat, capers, capsicum, coriander, kale, kiwifruit, mango, onions, papaya, parsley and watercress.

Indulge in moderate preservative-free red wine for its bioflavonoid quercetin which desensitises membranes. Another high quercetin kitchen cure is garlic. Raw garlic cloves or oil reduce mucus with a decongesting, anti-histamine hit, warding off secondary infections. Enzymes such as bromelain in pineapple and papain in papaya are also powerful anti-inflammatories. Try turmeric root in juices or powder with savoury dishes as an antioxidant, anti-allergy and anti-inflammatory tonic.

Beta carotene is natural vitamin A that builds the body's barrier against allergens. Think colourful foods such as apricots, carrots, goji berries, pumpkin, mango, sweet potatoes and leafy greens like spinach.

Omega 3 fatty acids can noticeably ease allergy symptoms by reducing pro-inflammatory eicosanoids and prostaglandin 1. Salmon, flax seed oil and eggs have abundant omega 3s.

A shot of apple cider vinegar has helped many of my hay fever clients. Apple cider vinegar is alkalising, optimising assimilation and elimination. Its high

Natural nasal sprays

A recent addition to the nasal spray market is all-natural soothing and moisturising sprays containing xylitol. One such spray, Xlear Nasal Sinus Spray has been clinically proven to promote upper respiratory health and is recommended in over 20 countries by ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialists, paediatricians, dentists and other health care practitioners. Used in daily hygiene, the xylitol nasal spray not only hydrates the sinuses, but also washes away airborne contaminants and pollutants. Best of all it is non-addictive, safe for use by children and can be used as often as needed to clean out mucus build-up and moisturise and soothe the sinuses and nasal passages.



potassium clears catarrh. Try two teaspoons before meals with Manuka honey.

Honey desensitises the body to pollens while optimising digestive enzymes to deal with allergens. Though honey contains pollens, a 1995 study found pollen sensitive subjects didn't react to honey pollen. Increasing honey in your daily diet should reduce hay fever symptoms significantly. It's best unheated with unique manuka factor (UMF).

Steam clean

The following herbs balance the immune response and reduce susceptibility to allergies.

Horseradish or wasabi steams sinuses clear. The initial heat makes more mucus and tears, leaving a drying after effect. It increases blood flow, flushing allergens. Stinging nettle is a favourite herb to heal hay fever horrors. It contains histamine and formic acid which curb hay fever flare ups.

Pycnogenol is a French pine bark extract which is a natural anti-histamine and anti-oxidant. One study showed it reduced birch pollen sensitivity by 39 per cent and decreased inflammatory leukotriene levels.

Albizia is Ayurveda's top anti-allergy herb. It clears mucus and eases inflammation.

Perilla is an ancient Chinese remedy for rhinitis and an antidote for seafood allergies. Studies show it suppresses antigen-specific IgE production and histamine release.

Homeopathic hay fever remedies to consider include *Arsenicum album* with burning membranes and *Allium cepa* with streaming eyes and nose.

Supplements

High doses of vitamin C and bioflavonoids maintain peaceful passages, guarding against hypersensitivity and concomitant infections. Its anti-histamine effect will kick in at around 1,000mg per day for adults.

An old favourite – garlic and horse-radish supplements – are perfect for those that don't fancy eating these herbs in their raw state.

Lifestyle

Reducing environmental allergens helps one face the world with more resilience. Dust mite sufferers can clean carpets, down quilts and pillows. Vacuum and air living space daily. Wash bedding and curtains with hot eucalyptus water. Air filters remove microscopic particles. Avoid animals and chemicals.

Steaming, cleaning and coating sinuses in a three-step process can give rapid relief. Steam with a bowl or basin of hot water and 10 drops tea tree or eucalyptus oil. Cover head and inhale vapours through the nose until mist disappears. Next, do a nasal colonic with a neti pot, following instructions to flush allergens away. After all excess water has been blown out smear the

inner nostrils with a few drops of black sesame oil or paw paw ointment. This acts as a protective barrier against allergen penetration.

Wash eyes in eyebright or fennel tea daily. Swiping eyelids with cotton buds.

Cleanse the lymph rich mouth by gargling thyme or tulsi tea. Swishing warm sesame oil in the mouth for a few minutes then spitting out can also expel irritants.

Warm and moisten membranes with plentiful water, herbal tea, vegetable juices and soups.

An allergic overreaction to one's environment can be fuelled by feelings of fear and threat. Try the daily affirmation, "The planet is a friendly place. I am peaceful and protected." ☺

Caroline Robertson has dedicated over two decades to natural therapies. For consultations, health retreats and guided meditations see www.carolinerobertson.com.au

