



# Healing News . . .

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## Herbal Medicines for Allergies

by Dr. Jill Stansbury

We welcome the return of the sun with great joy in the Pacific Northwest. —embracing the sun, the flowers and the fresh green growth after the grey drizzle of winter and early spring. For many of us, however, we pay for our delight in the garden and the first blush of colorful blooms with respiratory allergies. Allergies may present as mild itching of the eyes, nose and throat to more severe symptoms including nasal congestion and profuse mucous discharge that can progress to full-blown sinus infections, coughs, sore throats and asthmatic symptoms. Natural medicine has much to offer to those who suffer from allergies and seasonal hay fever.

Several herbs are excellent to help allay allergic symptoms. *Euphrasia officinale*, commonly referred to as Eyebright has been mentioned in ancient herbal medicine for itchy watery eyes, sneezing, and all the typical hayfever symptoms. It also seems to help immediately—not just after long term use. *Euphrasia* tincture may be taken by teaspoon many times a day, as needed. Several cups a day of *Euphrasia* tea may also be helpful. The flavor is bland and grassy, so it may be combined with tastier herbs such as mint or licorice.

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Nettles, which are also known by the Latin name - *Urtica*, are also noted to have anti-allergy effects. Interestingly the hairs of the Stinging Nettle contain histamine. Yet oral consumption seems to decrease excessive histamine activity in the body. Nettles are also extremely nourishing, rich in minerals, and helpful in promoting the excretion of metabolic wastes through the kidneys. Nettles have a rich “green” flavor and can be consumed as an herbal tea, used as a tincture or taken in an encapsulated form.



*Euphrasia officinale*

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### The Allergic Response

- Immediate immune system reaction.
- Symptoms may include redness, itchiness, swelling, and watery discharges.
- Symptoms may be severe.
- Conventional treatments may help the symptoms but will not change the immune system response.

## What happens? ... the allergic response

by Dr. Karen Benton

Allergy involves an immediate and a delayed response. An allergic response is an immune system immunoglobulin IgE mediated sensitivity.

Conventional medicine associates allergy with symptoms such as skin itching and wheals, itchy and watery eyes, stuffy sinuses, sore throat, difficulty breathing and stomach upset.

The immediate allergic response involves the release of amines (primarily histamine) from a variety of different types of cells in the blood and lymph system. This is called degranulation.

The delayed response may occur two-four hours after the immediate response and typically peaks about 24 hours after the exposure and slowly subsides over

several days. There are many immune system proteins which are released during this process.

Typical conventional treatments include antiinflammatory medications and steroids. These may help the symptoms but do not necessarily help the body to respond differently to environmental “allergic” triggers.

## Food Allergies

A food allergy is a bodily reaction to a food that can be measured by the body's immune system response through immunoglobulin (IgG or IgE) levels. Approximately 5% of the population respond to foods in this way. These reactions can be measured accurately through "scratch tests" or blood tests which measure immune system response.

Symptoms of food allergy may include runny nose, watery

eyes, throat mucous, hives, abdominal cramping, diarrhea or shortness of breath.

**The most common food allergens are: wheat, dairy, non-organic eggs, soy, corn, potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, red meat and citrus fruit.** Often people may also have allergic reactions to **food additives** such as sulfites, nitrites, monosodium glutamate, and artificial sweeteners. Eating a whole food, rather than proc-

*by Dr. Karen J. Benton*

essed foods will minimize these types of reactions.

When allergic foods are eaten, the immune system responds and produces allergic symptoms. After repeated "food assaults", the immune system becomes weakened and is less likely to respond to viral, bacterial or fungal imbalances. From a naturopathic perspective, this is why "never getting sick" may not always be a sign of optimum health.

## Food Intolerances and Sensitivities

There is a much broader term than food allergy and may include many types of more general symptoms associated with food reactivity. These may not result in an immune system reaction. Some people may lack the enzymes to break down certain foods. This is referred to as a food intolerance. Food intolerances rarely

can be changed, but can be supported through appropriate diet and other therapies.

The body may also react to a food "sensitivity" in such a way as to create diffuse symptoms such as fatigue, mental fogginess, breathing difficulties, headaches, joint pain, chronic infections, etc. It is

often difficult to determine specific foods causing symptoms because of their generalized nature as well as the timing delay in reactions.

The "gold standard" for determining food sensitivities is the eliminations and subsequent reintroduction of foods while logging body reactions.

Food Sensitivities can cause a variety of symptoms such as fatigue, mental fogginess, headaches and joint pain.

## Choosing the Right Foods for YOU!

People may react to foods based on their levels of endocrine function, digestive effectiveness, immune system activity, and individual and family history. The more often a person is exposed to a specific kind of food while the immune system is developing or stressed, the more likely he or

she is likely to be prone to food sensitivities. Clinically, some of the most common "food cravings" are those which are most harmful.

Our Clinic offers the following **resources to help you make better food choices:**

- "Anti-inflammatory Food Choices" \*
  - "Blood Type Food Choices" \*
  - VEGA/EAV Food Testing
  - [Eating Your Way Back to Health](#) Cookbook
- \* Available at no charge

# Herbal Medicines for Allergies

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*Tanacetum parthenium*, commonly referred to as Feverfew can reduce reactivity of white blood cells to offensive substances in the blood. White blood cells and platelets release histamine and other inflammatory substances which may begin a large scale allergic response. Feverfew is also used to improve migraines.

Last, but not least, one of the most effective herbs for hayfever is *Ephedra* or *Ma huang*. *Ephedra* opens the

airways and reduces blood cell reactivity. Ephedrine, the primary alkaloid in this twiggy plant has caffeine-like effect. So it should not be used by people who have caffeine intolerance. *Ephedra* is available by prescription only because some products inappropriately combined high concentrations of *Ephedra* with caffeine. Educated practitioners do not use *Ephedra* in this way and consider it helpful when used appropriately and judiciously.



*Ephedra sinica*

## Nutrition and Supplements

*Please consult your health care practitioner prior to treating yourself with these or other natural therapies.*

A variety of nutritional supplements may help reduce the body's tendency towards allergy. First, there is Vitamin C. When used at high doses it acts as a natural antihistamine. Typically this requires more

than 5 grams per day. Additionally, omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in fish, nuts and seeds such as flaxseed reduce inflammation and shift the body's immune system away from an allergic reaction. A typical dose is 1-3 grams omega-3 fatty acid/day.

Antioxidants such as Vita-

min E, A and selenium also help to reduce allergic reactions.

Bioflavonoids such as those found in the skin of brightly colored fruits and vegetables can also help to decrease allergic responses. Quercetin, hesperidin and catechin are some of the most frequently used.

*by Dr. Kelly Owens*

### Helpful Supplements

- Vitamins A, C and E
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Selenium and Zinc
- Bioflavonoids

## Homeopathic Medicines

Homeopathy may be useful in treating allergies, both acutely—during an attack and chronically to reduce the frequency and severity of allergy symptoms. While chronic treatment usually requires taking a “constitutional” remedy, acute attacks may be helped with these common remedies:

**Allium cepa:** Useful when there is profuse, watery discharge which “drips like a faucet.” This discharge often burns and is accompanied by violent sneezing.

**Euphrasia:** Useful when the eyes are affected with burning tears and itching. Nasal dis-

charge is bland and watery. Often there is intense itching.

**Sabadilla:** Good for debilitating sneezing and constant itching inside the nose.

**Apis:** Good for serious reactions with shortness of breath or asthma. —also with burning of face and/or eyes.

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**The Natural Goods Store at Battle Ground Healing Arts specializes in providing a wide range of dried herbs, herbal tinctures, essential oils, homeopathic medicines and other specialty items.**

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**Store hours are 9-4pm Tues.- Fri., 9-1pm Saturday**

**Store Phone Number (360) 687-4492**

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**Other resource websites:**

**[stepstohealthierclarkco.org](http://stepstohealthierclarkco.org)**

**[nwwise.com](http://nwwise.com)**

**[storewars.org](http://storewars.org)**

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## **Acupuncture and Allergies**

**by Laurie Solomon LAc**



According to Oriental medicine, allergies are due to repeated invasion of the lungs by wind and cold. Normally, the weather will not have any detrimental effect on the body when it is strong enough to defend itself. Wei-Qi or Defensive Qi circulates on the surface and protects the body from wind invasions. It is only when this protection becomes compromised that we are vulnerable to the elements.

Our defensive Qi can be weakened from lack of sleep, stress, negative emotions, poor diet or environmental toxins. From the Oriental medical

viewpoint these allergic reactions are the result of imbalances in energies and organs in the body.

Acupuncture needles act like switches in the body's energy circuit. Since the problem is not the allergy itself, but the body's reaction to the allergen—the switches reprogram the body so it doesn't react to pollen as a harmful substance. During allergy season, it is important to remember consumption of cold foods weakens the digestive function and cause interior "dampness." Sweets also weaken the spleen and create more phlegm.

Oriental Medicine is a blend of acupuncture, Chinese massage, herbal medicine, nutrition and exercise. Each treatment is customized for each person. Contrary to common misconceptions, acupuncture is not painful. Many clients become very relaxed and often fall asleep. The needles are very tiny—about the diameter of a human hair. For optimum safety, only pre-sterilized disposable needles are used.

For more information, see [www.acupuncture.com](http://www.acupuncture.com) or call

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