

JULY 2009 NEWSLETTER

Now that the cold weather is behind us, we can finally enjoy the beautiful, warm outdoors. But with the change of seasons also comes allergies. Sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, stuffy nose and sinuses, fatigue and breathing difficulties can be very uncomfortable. There are however many natural alternatives that can prevent and eliminate seasonal and other allergy symptoms.

What are allergies anyway? An allergy is an inflammatory immune response triggered by inhaling an irritant such as pollen, consuming foods or medications, or touching substances you are sensitive to. When you encounter these foreign substances, your body may react by making antibodies or releasing certain chemicals called histamines. Food allergy symptoms may present in a variety of ways including rash, breathing difficulties, hives and swelling. Allergy to pollen, spores, mold and dust affect the respiratory system and are usually the most challenging to control.

From a naturopathic medicine perspective, having allergies is often associated with an imbalanced in your immune and/or digestive system. Natural treatments are used to support and improve the function of these systems.

To reduce allergy symptoms, eat a diet that includes "good fats" such as omega-3 fatty acids found in salmon and other fish; complex-carbohydrates including vegetables, especially the dark green leafy ones; and whole grains. Also include garlic, onions, ginger, cayenne and at least eight cups of water daily to flush your system. It is also important to eliminate or decrease the intake of substances like alcohol, caffeine, red meat, sugar, chocolate and of course processed foods. It can also be beneficial for many to eliminate dairy products they may contribute to inflammation and be mucous forming. Rotating the foods in your diet is also a good way to prevent development of allergy to new foods.

When it comes to supplements, bioflavonoids such as vitamin C act as natural antihistamines. Certain fats such as fish oils can also decrease inflammation, and probiotics as well as bee pollen can strengthen the immune system. Herbs such as echinacea, astragalus root and goldenseal root can also boost your immune system. Additionally, homeopathic medicines and acupuncture can be beneficial to balance the body and prevent or eliminate allergies.

In the case of environmental allergy, it may be helpful to remove carpets or rugs from your home as hard floors are easier to clean and do not accumulate as much dust as carpets. Be sure to clean frequently (using non-toxic cleansers) and if you are allergic to dust mites, use covers to seal pillows and mattresses.

IN THE NEWS....

Not much to report other than Selene Wilkinson, ND who is covering Du's maternity leave, is really excited to be working at Toronto-Centre Naturopathic Medicine, and also that Du and Esme are doing very well.

HEALTH TIP

Who "knows" what a Neti Pot is?

If you are suffering from nasal congestion due to pollen, dust, pollution or other irritants, you may find the simple nasal irrigation technique of the Neti Pot to be beneficial. It works by pouring a saline solution through one nasal passage and letting it drain out the other to clear out mucus and stimulate the sinuses.

Although this may seem difficult or you may think it will be uncomfortable to have something pouring through your nasal passage, it is surprisingly pleasant. Simply follow the instructions below:

1. Fill the Neti Pot with warm (not hot) water and add a 1/4 teaspoon of non-iodized salt. Stir until dissolved.
2. Stand over the sink, and tilt your head to one side.
3. Insert the spout of the Neti Pot gently into the upper nostril creating a seal between the Neti Pot spout and the nostril.
4. Remember to breath through your mouth.
5. Tip the Neti Pot so that the saline solution flows into your upper nostril, like pouring a cup of tea, for about 20 seconds.
6. Once you are finished, exhale firmly to clear the nasal passages.
7. Then switch sides and repeat.

The Neti Pot can be bought at most health stores.