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Relief for Allergy Sufferers

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have been used to treat allergies for centuries, and studies have confirmed that it can be helpful for allergic conditions including allergic rhinitis, asthma, eczema, hives and food allergies. According to Oriental medicine, treatment is directed toward clearing the nasal passages, supporting the immune system and strengthening the systems of the body to prevent allergic reactions from recurring. Sufferers of seasonal allergies also find relief using acupuncture and traditional medicine.



What Are Seasonal Allergies?

Commonly called hay fever or allergic rhinitis, a seasonal allergy is an allergic reaction to an environmental trigger that is typically only present for part of the year, such as spring or fall. Pollens that are spread by the wind are usually the main cause of seasonal allergies. People who are allergic to pollens are also often sensitive to dust mites, animal dander, and molds.

Spring is traditionally the main season when allergies blossom because of new growth on trees and weeds. Fall ushers in a whole different set of blooming plants, and is also a time of increased leaf mold, so is the second-worst season for allergy sufferers. Airborne mold spores can be found almost year round, along with other common allergens such as dust, dust mites, and animal dander.

About 26 million Americans endure chronic seasonal allergies, while the number of people with milder symptoms may be as high as 40 million, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Seasonal allergies are caused by the body's hypersensitivity to substances in the environment. Symptoms primarily involve the membrane lining the nose, causing allergic rhinitis, or the membrane lining the eyelids and covering the whites of the eyes, causing allergic conjunctivitis.

While there are many medications to treat the symptoms of seasonal allergies, these treatments can cause unwanted side effects, such as drowsiness and immune system suppression as well as an over-reliance on medications. These side effects have motivated many people to search for alternative approaches like acupuncture and Oriental medicine to manage their allergies.

How Acupuncture Treatments Provide Relief from Allergies

According to Oriental medicine, allergic rhinitis is related to Wind and a deficiency of the protective *Wei Qi*. *Wei Qi* is the energy that flows at the surface of the body as a protective sheath and is responsible for resistance to colds and other respiratory infections. People with a deficiency of *Wei Qi* catch colds easily and are more susceptible to allergens.

When treating with acupuncture, underlying imbalances within the body are addressed. A treatment plan is developed to relieve the acute symptoms of allergic rhinitis while also treating the root problems that are contributing to the body's reaction to allergens. Treatments often include dietary modification, the use of specifically chosen herbal formulas, and acupuncture.

Seasonal acupuncture treatments just four times a year also serve to notify the inner organ systems and can correct minor annoyances before they become serious problems. If you experience seasonal allergies, now is the time to schedule an appointment. Call for a consultation today!

Acupuncture Is Effective for Allergic Rhinitis

The American Journal of Epidemiology recently published a study that showed that acupuncture can significantly relieve allergic rhinitis symptoms.

In this German study, 5,237 men and women were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of acupuncture in addition to routine care in patients with allergic rhinitis, compared to treatment with routine care alone.

In this trial, patients with allergic rhinitis were randomly allocated to receive acupuncture for a three month period or to a control group that received no acupuncture. All patients were allowed to receive routine medical care. The Rhinitis Quality of Life Questionnaire (RQLQ) and general health-related quality of life (36-Item Short-Form Health Survey) were evaluated at baseline and after three and six months.

Improvements were noted at the three- and six-month evaluations for the patients receiving acupuncture. The authors of this trial concluded that treating patients with allergic rhinitis in routine care with additional acupuncture leads to clinically relevant and persistent benefits.

Source: European Journal of Integrative Medicine. 2008 Nov;101(5):535-43

Acupuncture Shows Promise in Treating Children's Allergies

In a small Hong Kong-based study, allergy sufferers between the ages of 6 and 19 showed clear evidence of improvement after being treated with acupuncture as compared with those treated by "sham" acupuncture, as was reported in the journal Pediatrics in 2004. Some of the children in the study were able to quit using antihistamines and other medications during the study, as well.

Source: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 2004

Foods for Seasonal Allergies

Having a healthy diet is one of the best ways to support your overall health. When possible, incorporate the following foods into your meals to give your body additional tools to fight allergies.

Ginger: Ginger is a natural antihistamine and decongestant. It may provide some relief from allergy symptoms by dilating constricted bronchial tubes.

Apples: Apples (with the skin on) contain the flavonoid quercetin, which can cross-react with tree pollen. Quercetin can reduce allergic reactions by having an antihistamine effect. It also decreases inflammation.

Quercetin also occurs naturally in other foods, like berries, red grapes, red onions, capers, and black tea.

Carrots: Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet is thought to promote inflammation in your airways.

Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash, and collard greens.



Omega-3: Omega-3 essential fatty acids can counter the formation of chemicals that cause inflammation of the air passages. Good natural sources include flaxseed oil and salmon.

Yogurt: Food sensitivities seem to be connected with seasonal allergies. In a study conducted at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, patients who were fed 18 to 24 ounces of yogurt a day experienced a decline in their environmental allergic symptoms by 90 percent.

Fiber: A healthy and active colon can decrease food sensitivity, which, in turn, can lighten the burden on your immune system and may reduce the impact of seasonal allergies. For maximum colon health, increase the fiber in your diet.

