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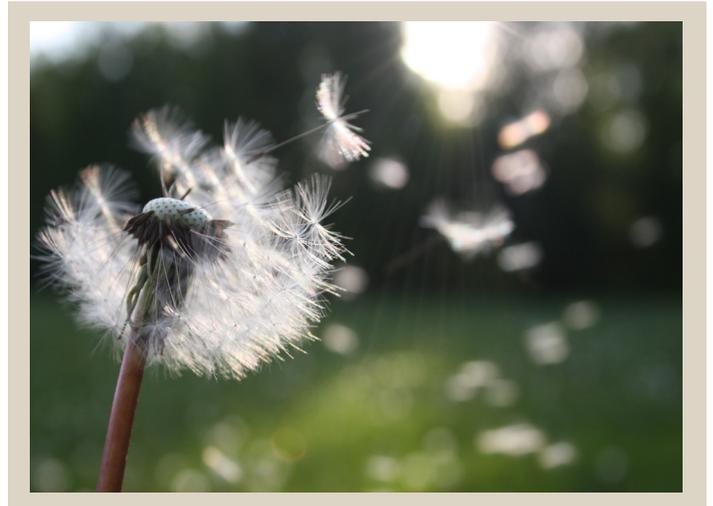
Wellness Wednesday

How to Handle Your Spring Allergies

Spring is beautiful, but it's also a key time of year for seasonal allergies. As plants release pollen, millions of people with hay fever start to sniffle and sneeze. There's no cure but you can take steps to curb springtime allergies, from medication to household habits.

Causes

The biggest spring allergy trigger is pollen. Trees, grasses, and weeds release these tiny grains into the air to fertilize other plants. When they get into the nose of someone who's allergic, they send the body's defenses haywire. The immune system mistakenly sees the pollen as a danger and releases antibodies that attack the allergens. That leads to the release of chemicals called histamines into the blood. Histamines trigger the runny nose, itchy eyes, and other symptoms that are all too familiar if you have allergies. Pollen can travel for miles, so it's not just about the plants in your neighborhood. Pollen counts tend to be particularly high on breezy days when the wind picks up these sneeze-inducing grains and carries them through the air. Rainy days, on the other hand, wash away the allergens.



Grasses and weeds:

Bermuda
Fescue
Johnson
June
Orchard
Perennial rye
Redtop
Saltgrass
Sweet vernal
Timothy

Trees

Alder
Ash
Aspen
Beech
Box elder
Cedar
Cottonwood
Cypress
Elm
Hickory
Juniper
Maple
Mulberry
Oak
Olive
Palm
Pine
Poplar
Sycamore
Willow

Symptoms

You may have:

Runny nose
Watery eyes
Sneezing
Coughing
Itchy eyes and nose
Dark circles under the eyes

Diagnosis

Start with your regular doctor. She may refer you to an allergist for tests. The allergy specialist may give you a skin test, which involves either a pricking the surface of the skin with a tiny amount of allergen (prick test), or injecting a tiny sample of a diluted allergen under the skin of your arm or back. If you're allergic to the substance, a small red bump (called a wheal or hive) will form. Sometimes, you may get a blood test.

Over-the-Counter and Prescription Allergy Treatments

There are many medicines that can ease the symptoms of allergies. They include:

Antihistamines reduce sneezing, sniffing, and itching by lowering the amount of histamine in your body. Decongestants shrink the blood vessels in the nasal passageways to relieve congestion and swelling.

Antihistamine/decongestant combos combine the effects of both drugs.

Nasal spray decongestants relieve congestion and may clear clogged nasal passages faster than oral decongestants without some of the side effects.

Steroid nasal sprays ease inflammation and are the preferred initial treatment. Only three, budesonide (Rhinocort Allergy), fluticasone (Flonase), and triamcinolone (Nasacort Allergy 24HR), are available over the counter. Cromolyn sodium nasal spray can help prevent hay fever by stopping the release of histamine before it can trigger allergy symptoms.

Eye drops relieve itchy, watery eyes. Ketotifen (Zaditor) is available over the counter.

Even though you can buy these allergy drugs without a prescription, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor first to make sure you choose the right medication. Some antihistamines can make you feel sleepy, so be careful if you take them during the day. Non-drowsy types are also available. If you feel like you need over-the-counter antihistamines and decongestants for more than a few days, talk to your doctor.

Have you tried OTC remedies and need something more?

Your doctor may recommend a prescription medication, allergy shots, or under-the-tongue immunotherapy tablets. Many steroid nasal sprays are available by prescription too.

Immunotherapy gives you gradually increasing doses of the allergen until your body can handle it. The treatment can relieve your symptoms for a longer time than other types of allergy medications. Although it doesn't work for everyone, it can stave off some people's symptoms for a few years.

Are There Natural Remedies for Allergies?

Nasal irrigation uses a combination of warm water, about a quarter-teaspoon of salt, and a quarter-teaspoon of baking soda to clear out mucus and open sinus passages. You can use a squeeze bottle or a neti pot, which looks like a small teapot. Use distilled, sterile, or previously boiled water to make up the solution. It's also important to rinse the irrigation device after each use and leave open to air dry.

Some others have mixed research on how much they help:

Butterbur — This herb, which comes from a European shrub, shows potential for relieving seasonal allergy symptoms. Some studies show butterbur -- specifically an extract called Ze 339 -- to work as well at easing allergy symptoms as some antihistamines.

Quercetin — This nutrient is found in onions, apples, and black tea. It's been shown in research to block the release of histamines.



Stinging nettle — Although some people use freeze-dried stinging nettle leaves to treat allergy symptoms, there isn't much research to show that it works.

Talk to your doctor before you start any herbal product. Some can cause side effects or can react with medications you take.

5 Tips to Keep Pollen at Bay

1. Try to stay indoors whenever the pollen count is very high. The counts usually peak in the mornings.
2. Keep your doors and windows closed during the spring months to keep allergens out. An air purifier may also help.
3. Clean the air filters in your home often. Also, clean bookshelves, vents, and other places where pollen can collect.
4. Wash your hair after going outside, because the allergen can collect there.
5. Vacuum twice a week. Wear a mask, because vacuuming can kick up pollen, mold, and dust that were trapped in your carpet.

Source: WebMD, <https://wb.md/2rv9KpS>



This Week's Exercise

RECLINING HAND TO BIG TOE POSE



Let's Get Started

1. Begin on your back with the legs extended long
2. Bring your right knee towards your chest, loop a strap (or towel) around the arch of the right foot and extend it toward the ceiling. If you don't have a prop available, just straighten into the leg as much as you can comfortably
3. Keep your shoulders on the mat and keep the left leg relaxed on the floor
4. Breathe here for a few minutes
5. Repeat the sequence with the other leg

Source: <https://bit.ly/2pGA7sM>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

CUCUMBER, PARSLEY, PINEAPPLE AND LEMON SMOOTHIE



Directions

Place all the ingredients in a large blender and blast on high 1 minute, until smooth and creamy. Divide in two cups.

Ingredients

3/4 cup coconut water (or water)
1/2 English cucumber, chopped
1 bunch flat leaf parsley, leaves only, chopped
2 medium lemons, peeled and seeded
2 cups fresh pineapple, frozen
5 drops liquid stevia, or more to taste

Nutrition Information

Servings: 2
Size: 1 smoothie

Points+: 3 pt
Smart Points: 1
Calories: 118
Fat: 0 g
Carb: 31 g
Fiber: 5 g
Protein: 2 g
Sugar: 18 g
Sodium: 24 mg
Cholesterol: 0 mg

Recipe source:
<https://bit.ly/2jIReqs>