

Treating Allergies Naturally with an Integrative, Holistic Approach

Allergies are related to an 'over-reaction' of your immune system. Effective treatment requires addressing the internal and environmental contributing factors. By addressing anything that may be activating your immune system and/or promoting chronic inflammation, we can sometimes decrease or avoid allergy symptoms. Please read below for guidelines to a multifaceted approach:

A basic approach for decreasing inflammation:

- 1.) Please read the anti-inflammatory diet, low glycemic index, and health fats handouts in the resource section of our website. These will give you a foundation for a lifestyle plan.
- 2.) Increase anti-inflammatory spices in your cooking such as ginger, basil, rosemary, and turmeric.
- 3.) Increase anti-inflammatory foods, and decrease or eliminate potentially inflammatory ones.
- 4.) Increase fresh water, and aim to drink $\frac{1}{2}$ your body weight in water per day.
- 5.) You will need to decrease or avoid sugar/sweeteners, wheat, dairy, soy, and alcohol during the allergy season.
- 6.) You may benefit from trying a modified elimination diet to reveal underlying food allergies that may be contributing to inflammation. A modified elimination diet focuses on sugar/sweeteners, wheat, gluten, dairy, and soy. Basically, eliminate all of them strictly for one month and then reintroduce them at a rate of one item per week. Introduce gluten before wheat and treat them as separate tests. Keep a journal of your symptoms, and know that sometimes effects are delayed for up to 3-4 days.
- 7.) If you are suspicious of gut inflammation, you might consider a 1-2 month regimen of a probiotic, L-glutamine 1000mg 3x daily, aloe vera juice, and being strict about possible allergenic/inflammatory foods. You can read Digestive Wellness by Liz Lipski for more.
- 8.) Nutrients such as fiber, silymarin (milk thistle), glutathione, alpha lipoic acid, and N-acetyl cysteine, and buffered vitamin C can be helpful in supporting the body's natural detoxification pathways. Deep breathing, regular exercise, sweating, healthy bowels, and adequate hydration are essential for eliminating the toxins.
- 9.) Manage your stress. Find something healthy that helps you unwind. This might be meditation, time in nature, yoga, artwork, laughing, time with supportive friends, or whatever it is that helps you release life's challenges in a healthy way. Be particularly aware of the tendency to use food or alcohol to compensate for stress since this can lead to even more inflammation and stress hormones in the body.

Looking at your environment:

1. Pay attention to the season in which allergies occur. Small pollen is early Spring, large pollen comes next, and mid to late Summer is sometimes mold. Try to determine your season and the cause.
2. Look at your home. Do you have pets, is it an older home with mold concerns, is it a newer home with VOC's (off-gassing), do you have adequate ventilation with fresh air, do you use bathroom fans to decrease humidity from showers, do your closets smell like mildew? Give it a thorough assessment to make sure that your home is not activating your immune system. Do your best to mediate concerns since this can have a significant impact on your health.
3. Consider creating a 'safe room' for sleeping. This is a room that you have cleaned thoroughly, have roomed all potential allergens (including down comforters and pets,) and may even have a HEPA air filter to clean the air for that room. Be sure to check the closets, wipe the walls, and if possible address any crawlspaces under the room. This room provides a sanctuary that is free from allergens so that your body recovers at night.

4. In the Asheville area mold is often a concern in older homes, or even in newer homes when air conditioning is not used in the late Summer months. Consider setting your A/C to at least to 75 or 80 in the late Summer months to dehumidify the air (with your windows closed.) Also, close the windows during Spring/Summer rainstorms if mold is a problem.

Managing symptoms:

You can try one or all of these. You'll need to find the one or combination that works for you. They are listed in the order of what to try first.

1. If possible, limit exposure to the allergen if you were able to determine the cause. Airborne pollen levels are typically highest from 5:00 am to 10 am.
2. Neti pot or nasal irrigation 2 x daily with clean water and non-iodized salt. This will help clear mucous as well as some of the allergens that may have accumulated in your sinuses.
3. Nettles Tea, Tincture, or freeze-dried Tablets can be helpful
4. Quercetin 400mg-600mg 1-3 x daily. It is usually blended with bromelain and vitamin C to increase absorption. This has been shown to be as effective as Zyrtec in some studies.
5. Butterbur taken 4 x daily can be as helpful as anti-histamines without the side effects. You must get a product that is free of pyrrolizidine alkaloids (it should say it on the bottle.)
6. Vitamin C in a buffered form 2000 mg daily and Vitamin B6 100-200mg daily.
7. Some people find benefit with small amounts of raw local honey for decreasing allergies. You do not want to use large amounts of honey because it can be high-glycemic and actually promote inflammation. Total sweeteners should be < 22gms/d women and <35 gms/d men.
8. Omega 3 fatty acids (with EPA and DHA) 2-3000 mg daily
9. Probiotics containing bifidus have been shown to help decrease allergic response
10. Reishi mushroom as a tincture or tea can be helpful for moderating immune response and is thought to be a general tonic in Chinese Medicine.
11. Magnesium glycinate 400 mg 1-2 x daily
12. L-glutamine 1000mg 3 x daily may help to heal 'leaky gut' and thus decrease the overall inflammatory load on the body. You will need to remove potential food allergens and consider other aspects of healing the gut as mentioned above.

Foods that help decrease allergies:

1. Water. Drink about ½ your body weight in ounces of fresh, clean water daily. You can add some fresh lemon or lime to the water to help with taste and also provide anti-oxidants.
2. Unsalted nuts such as walnuts that have no added oils (soybean, canola, etc.)
3. Cold water fish such as salmon that contain anti-inflammatory Omega 3 fatty acids.
4. Citrus fruits, apples, onions, parsley, sage, green tea, olive oil, grapes, dark cherries, and dark berries are sources of anti-oxidants including Quercetin
5. Kale. Why spends a lot of money on 'superfoods' when you can grow kale year-round in your backyard. Steam it, blend it, dehydrate it. There are many ways to enjoy this amazing green.
6. Soak your beans and grains overnight (24hrs) and then rinse before cooking. This will help remove some of the compounds that cause irritation in some people.
7. Quinoa, amaranth, and millet are alternatives to gluten-containing grains. Eat in moderation.
8. Broccoli, cabbage, and cruciferous vegetables. If you have thyroid concerns, make sure that you steam vegetables in the Brassica family.
9. If you eat meat, only consume meat from sources that are wild-caught or grass fed. They have fewer inflammatory fats. Only **6 oz** at a time, and not at every meal.