

Hay Fever



It is springtime! A time of growth in nature and a time of irritation is in store for many people. This irritation usually begins at our nose and can travel in eight directions (east, west, south, north, in, out, up and down) to cause itchy eyes, sinusitis, headaches, sore throat, ear congestion, dizziness and infections.

Hay fever is a hypersensitivity reaction of our immunity to air-borne substances such as pollens, dust, dust mites, fur, animal dandruff, feathers, spores, molds, plants and chemicals. It is commonly called allergic rhinitis with symptoms of running nose, nasal congestion, postnasal drip, sneezing, itchy, reddened eyes, conjunctivitis, sore throat. Hay fever can also affect the trachea and the lungs, causing shortness of breath, chest congestion, wheezing and asthma. Hay fever frequently turns into a sinus infection, and when severe, fever and headaches.

Allergies tend to run in families, and those who suffer are likely to have children who are affected by hay fever as well. All the above air-borne substances are allergens causing the body to produce antibodies that release histamine. Histamines are what cause the allergic reaction. Avoiding allergens can keep the symptoms at bay. Conventional therapies call for antihistamines, decongestants, oral steroids, and corticosteroid sprays, bronchodilator inhaler, and allergy injections. But using a combination of natural remedies, alternative treatments such as Chinese medicine may be all you need to relieve the symptoms. Furthermore, Chinese medicine can be used to diagnose and treat the underlying imbalances that cause the allergies in the first place.

Chinese medicine views the cause of allergies as an imbalance of our organ system. This imbalance can be caused by excessive stress in our life, poor dietary choices, sluggish digestion, and hormonal changes such as pregnancy, menopause and others. When these organ imbalances are treated, the allergies usually improve. For example, relieving one's constipation and poor digestion frequently eliminates or reduces allergy symptoms. Changing dietary habits such as reducing fatty foods, dairy products, refined sugar, alcohol and caffeine can also help. Meditation and leading a less anxious life can reduce allergy symptoms.

Dental problems can also affect the sinus. Underlying dental infections should be treated since about 20 percent of people with chronic sinus problems usually have an underlying dental infection. Good dental hygiene is crucial and herbs such as dandelion, gentian root, elder flowers can be used for dental infections.

A good night of sleep helps to calm our nerves and reduce our hypersensitivity. Most adults need about eight hours of restful sleep, while children need nine to ten hours. Regular exercise is important for improving blood circulation, relaxing the nervous system, relaxing our immune system. A home remedy of saline drainage can also be helpful in some situations. Mix three teaspoonfuls of salt with warm water. In the shower, tilt your head back and slowly pour the saline water into your nostrils. It may burn initially, but you may also feel better in the morning when you wake up.

In acupuncture treatments, the lung and large intestine channels are frequently targeted. Lung and large intestines are sister organs in the Chinese Medicine point of view. Any congestion build up in either organ can affect the other and cause sinus symptoms. A frequently used point, Large Intestine 20, located right next to both sides of the nose, in the groove beside each nostril, is an effective point for sinus allergy. Massages can also be applied on this point by using both index fingers, applying steady, penetrating finger pressure to both points for three minutes every half hour until symptoms get better. Herbs such as stinging nettle, Ionicera, chrysanthemum, folium mori, angelica, magnolia, can be used for sinus allergy and infection. And most importantly, preventive measures should be considered as the allergy season begins. When one abuses their body in the winter, one might suffer greatly from allergies and infections in the spring. Conscious health habits in the winter help to have a better spring.