

[IMAGE]

Cold and Allergy Busters

By Tina Yang

Coughing, sniffing and sneezing? It's that time of year again: cold and allergy season. Rather than reaching for medication, learn how eating right and taking natural supplements can help combat those cold and allergy symptoms.

It's that time of year again. As the wind picks up and the leaves change color, the amount of pollen in the air increases, causing the annual onset of seasonal allergies. This is also the time when most people raid the drugstore and stock up on quick fixes to rid their bodies of whatever ails them. But before you jump in your car, you may want to take a serious look at some natural healing alternatives that will not only do the trick, but also will save your body from all of the side effects often associated with traditional over-the-counter drugs.

The annual surge in pollen triggers many of us to have allergy attacks or suffer from hay fever, which brings symptoms including nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing and red and itchy eyes. We typically treat these symptoms with antihistamines, steroid inhalers and over-the-counter decongestant sprays, all of which can have side effects such as dizziness, fatigue, insomnia, nervousness and gastrointestinal disturbances.

Natural Treatments

Woman blowing snow off of her gloves. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark A more natural way to treat these symptoms is with drugless health care. For example, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which includes Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture, treats your "whole self" to determine the underlying imbalances within your body. By identifying these imbalances, acupuncturists are able to simultaneously treat the root cause of the problem, as well as alleviate the symptoms. Ideally, you should seek acupuncture treatment before the start of the symptoms; however, if the symptoms have already begun, treatments will relieve your symptoms and support the immune system, thereby preventing future allergy attacks.

Supplements are another effective way to treat cold and allergy symptoms. For example, echinacea is an effective therapeutic herb used to fight many infectious conditions including upper respiratory infections, the common cold and sinusitis. Chinese herbs such as *huang qi* (*Astragalus membranaceus*) can boost the

immune system, helping the body fight off infections. *Huang qi* has an antibiotic-like effect, which helps to minimize the severity of common cold symptoms and reduce the duration of the illness.

Home Remedies

Other cold and allergy relief solutions can be found right in your own home. Drinking warm teas such as green tea also can support one's immune function. Green tea is a powerful antioxidant that has been shown to inhibit cancer cell growth. In addition to cancer prevention, green tea also can be beneficial in the therapy and prevention of other diseases.

Woman playing in the snow. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark You also should keep windows closed whenever possible and use air conditioning to keep you cool when necessary. If possible, shower and change your clothes immediately after being outdoors, and avoid going out between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., when pollen levels are highest. In addition, limit the use of humidifiers, since they can actually cause mold to accumulate in the house, making allergies worse.

Eating a healthy diet with fewer dairy products, processed sugar and yeast-containing foods also can make you feel better. These foods create an overabundance of dampness in the body, which will aggravate the symptoms of nasal congestion and nasal discharge. They also can make your symptoms more severe and increase your down time. Taking a multivitamin to boost your immune system and getting plenty of rest will help strengthen your immune system, allowing your body to resist the allergens that caused the seasonal allergy symptoms in the first place. By doing this, you'll also help prevent the allergy symptoms from recurring year after year.

So, as the fall and winter seasons bring many beautiful changes to your environment, don't be afraid to make a few changes as well. The next time the allergy season rolls around, try a more holistic and natural approach to nursing yourself back to good health. You'll not only start feeling better *faster*, you'll also be armed and ready for *next* year's cold and allergy season, and your body will thank you for it!

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