

## Natural Treatments for Allergy Sufferers- Take The Power Back!

Are you looking for a long term, natural solution for your seasonal or food allergies? Naturopathic remedies empower you to achieve relief from the annoying symptoms of hayfever and allergies without side effects, and can also prevent allergies from recurring! Allergies tend to run in families, and affect the young, old, and everyone in between. Here is the story of a family who took their frustration with allergies into their own hands. With Naturopathic Medicine's traditional wisdom and scientific support, they turned resentful, sniffing spring into a season of scents, sunny afternoons in parks, and appreciation of nature's beauty.

Allison, 36, came into my office in May complaining of a stuffy nose and itchy, watery eyes each spring, along with frequent colds during the year. She looked tired, and reported having had these annual symptoms for as long as she can remember. She was concerned that her daughter, 7 year old Kiera, had dark circles under her eyes, and wiped at her nose constantly, causing a horizontal crease. Her youngest son Ben was 6 months old and had a red rash on his cheeks. Allison wanted like to spare her children from the fatigue of fighting allergies and respiratory symptoms year after year. Allison had been medicating her family for allergy symptoms, but wanted to explore natural treatments that would treat their root cause instead of just masking the symptoms.

After conducting physical examinations on the family, I explained to Allison that allergies are the body's abnormal immune reaction to normally harmless substances such as food and environmental substances. The severity of allergies can vary from individual symptoms such as a rash or sneezing to anaphylaxis, a medical emergency that may present with symptoms including chest pain, difficulty breathing, confusion or cramping sensations. Kiera's habit of wiping of her runny, creased nose and the dark under eye circles are hallmark signs of allergies, known as the "allergic salute" (the upwards wiping) and allergic shiners. Hayfever, also known as allergic rhinitis, may present as a year round condition or as a seasonal one. As I tell all patients who suffer from allergies, it is important to identify and remove the causative allergic agents and also to build up the body's defenses to further infections and for the upcoming seasons.

The first step in the family's treatment plan was to assess the cause of their allergies. To do this, I analyzed the blood's antibodies to environmental allergens and foods. Individuals with allergies often have coexisting food sensitivities which tax and weaken the immune system. These tests are more sensitive than skin prick testing, which tests for immediate hypersensitivity reactions only, as many allergic reactions take up to 72 hours to manifest. By removing food allergens from the diet or eating them on a rotational basis, the body is given time to rebuild its defenses. Allison's son Ben, who was still breastfeeding, was very possibly allergic to foods that Allison was eating. One common food additive that is particularly allergenic is tartrazine, often listed as FD&C Yellow #5, which is a dye that imparts a yellow hue to food products. It is also present in other colour combinations such as blue and green, and is found in prescription and non prescription drugs as well. Considering that producers do not legally have to disclose the addition of tartrazine if it occurs in a food within a food (e.g. in jam within a packaged cake), I recommended that Allison start to read ingredient labels. She agreed to avoid most factory made food, lower quality supplements, and drugs with additives and colour dyes from her family's home.

Next, Allison and I looked for ways to incorporate healing foods into her family's diet. Foods that contain vitamin C and bioflavonoids are helpful, as these immune enhancing agents that help to decrease histamine levels in the blood. The flavonoid quercetin has a structural and behavioural similarity to the drug Cromolyn, which is used by medical doctors to prevent allergy symptoms by decreasing histamine levels. Including quercetin rich foods such as onions and apple skin regularly in the diet or as a supplement throughout the year actually prevents allergy symptoms. Citrus fruits and darkly pigmented berries and vegetables such as cherries, dark grapes, broccoli and peppers are other great choices for allergy relief.

To treat the family's overburdened immune and detoxification systems, I prescribed gentle herbs to help the adrenal glands and the liver. The adrenal glands secrete hormones in response to stress, and are often overtaxed and not functioning optimally in cases of allergies. Teas or tinctures which contain herbs such as licorice, astragalus, milk thistle and nettle help to support the body while it heals and prevent further strong allergic reactions.

To alleviate the family's uncomfortable symptoms, I prescribed natural relief in the form of homeopathic and herbal remedies. Homeopathic remedies are small pellets that can be kept in pockets or purses and used whenever symptoms arise. They are prescribed to help with groups of symptoms such as sneezing and runny discharge that burns the nose and lip, or to soothe irritated mucus membranes of the eyes. I also recommended using a humidifier with eucalyptus essential oil and learning baby massage using oils of lemon balm, lavender or blue chamomile for Ben.

Within five weeks of treatment, Allison returned enthusiastically and reported that Ben's rash had cleared and his nose was less runny, Kiera's nose wiping had decreased, and that her own eyes and nose were less watery and irritated. She still felt some slight sinus congestion but her energy levels had increased by 50%, and she was sleeping better. She asked about acupuncture, and I created a plan that would further aid Allison with her allergic symptoms, as well as enhance the strengthening of her adrenal system and her overall health and wellbeing. Acupuncture adheres to the Naturopathic principle of treating the whole person individually, and balances energy along lines called meridians, to help eliminate symptoms and strengthen the body.

Allison and her family are a successful example of the power in using Naturopathic remedies to treat the cause and the symptoms of allergies. Remedies as simple as using natural alternatives to medications, eliminating food additives and adding healing foods and herbs make a big difference and prevent further flare ups of symptoms. Free yourself from a future of allergies- make your home a healthier place to live, play and breathe easy in spring and all year round!