

springtime allergies

they're nothing to sneeze at

Spring's a beautiful time of year. But for those suffering from seasonal allergies, it means a battle with symptoms that range from runny nose, sneezing, congestion, and sinus pressure to coughing, watery eyes, sore throat, and fatigue.

While many rely on antihistamines for relief, this type of treatment may cause side effects, including drowsiness. Fortunately there are supplements, herbs, and lifestyle strategies that can help. You may not be able to stop Mother Nature from bringing on allergens in all their glory, but you can help control symptoms and in the process gain some relief. Now that's a beautiful spring.

More Relief

Avoid allergens before they can affect you. When you come in from the outdoors, remove your clothing and take a shower. If possible, wear a dust mask when working outside. Mow the lawn regularly before the grass flowers.

Stay inside when it's dry and windy, as well as between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m., when pollen counts are highest.

To combat mold and airborne allergens that find their way indoors, run a high-quality air purifier.

Some individuals find relief through a neti pot. This simple and effective treatment clears mucus out of the nasal passages with saltwater, so you can breathe more easily. Portable nasal sprays with xylitol are another option.

Try eating yogurt daily during allergy season. Research at UC Davis finds this practice can help reduce grass pollen symptoms.

At the end of the day, consider adding eucalyptus oil to your bath or steam inhaler to alleviate congestion. **TFL**

selected SOURCES **"Butterbur Ze339 for the Treatment of Intermittent Allergic Rhinitis . . ."** by A. Schapowal and Petasites Study Group, *Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*, 12/04 n **"Dusting off Nine Seasonal Allergy Myths"** by Joseph Brownstein, www.abcnews.com, 4/1/09 n **"Environmental and Occupational Allergies"** by D. Peden and C. E. Reed, *J Allergy Clin Immunol*, 2/10 n **"Nettle Extract (*Urtica dioica*) Affects Key Receptors and Enzymes Associated with Allergic Rhinitis"** by B. Roschek, Jr. et al., *Phytother Res*, 1/12/09 n **"Oral Bromelain Attenuates Inflammation . . ."** by E. R. Secor et al., *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*, 3/08 n **"Role of Quercetin . . . in Allergy and Inflammation"** by Y. B. Shaik et al., *J Biol Regul Homeost Agents*, 7–12/06 n **"Standardized Bark Extract of French Maritime Pine (Pycnogenol) Decreases Nasal and Ocular Symptoms . . ."** by D. Wilson et al., 8/10; **"Study Finds Astragalus Formula Beneficial in Treating Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis"** by Marissa Opper, 7/31/09, *HerbClip*

Herbs to help fight allergies

Astragalus works to stimulate the immune system. It also helps reduce symptoms such as sneezing and itching. Research suggests that astragalus may be even more effective when taken before the start of allergy season.

Butterbur is a natural antihistamine, but it won't make you drowsy.

Garlic has more than 70 active ingredients, including high concentrations of quercetin, which helps slow inflammation.

Ginkgo contains seven antihistamines as well as anti-inflammatory plant chemicals that work against allergies.

Stinging Nettle can provide great relief from allergies. With natural antihistamines and anti-inflammatories (such as quercetin), it helps alleviate a stuffy nose and boosts the body's resistance to allergens such as molds and pollens.

Supplements to help fight allergies

Bromelain, taken on an empty stomach, helps break down allergy-related compounds like histamine. Bromelain thins the blood, so if you have a bleeding disorder or take blood-thinning medications, use caution with this supplement.

Pycnogenol, an extract of French maritime pine, has been shown to be effective in treating hay fever and can help reduce allergic reactions to birch pollen. Researchers emphasize starting treatment early, anywhere from 5 to 7 weeks before allergy season begins.

Quercetin is a good choice for blocking histamine release, which triggers symptoms. It works more slowly than prescription antihistamines, so start taking this supplement at the very beginning of allergy season.

To support the immune system, supplement with a B-vitamin complex, antioxidant vitamins A and C, and zinc.