

Allergy Defense

Sniffles & Sneezes & Tissues, Oh, My!

by Margy Squires

Just when the weatherman stopped reporting a 99% chance of snow, another threat looms in the friendly skies. The budding, blossoming and greening of spring is evident everywhere and your nose knows! Your decorator style has become strategically placing little designer boxes of tissues all over the house. Your medicine cabinet hosts an array of bottles and boxes with promises to stifle sniffles and stop sneezes. You almost wish it would snow again!

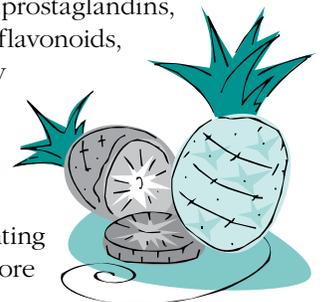
What is an allergy? Basically it's an overreaction of your immune system to tiny substances called allergens in food, water, plants and other material that you're sensitive to which trigger a response or "allergic reaction". Allergies are often named for how and when they occur. Seasonal depend on the time of year, mostly to outdoor plants, grass, trees and pollen. Indoor problems with dust, animal dander, mold and chemicals are usually perennial or year round. Symptoms vary as chronic or acute, viral or not. Skin hives or rashes result from allergies on contact, but most allergens are inhaled, affecting the entire respiratory tract: nose, throat and lungs. The reaction is classic: inflamed and blocked passages, scratchy eyes and a sniffing, stuffy or runny nose. If you can't avoid the offenders, reinforcing and protecting the immune system is your next best defense.



Allergies are no small business. More than 50 million Americans (1 in 5) have some form of allergies, evidenced by the rows of remedies you'll find in any local drug store. Typically, sufferers reach for antihistamines and/or decongestants. Antihistamines are designed to control the reaction by blocking histamines, the immune system's response to the perceived invader. They can make you doozy and sleepy. Decongestants help shrink swollen membranes and blood vessels so you can breathe again but have a rebound effect such that membranes swell again, especially if using nasal sprays. Other over-the-counter options may not be much better. Rather than struggling to stop the allergic roller coaster once it starts, try a preventive approach. Strengthen and support the immune factors involved. You may lessen and even eliminate the sneezing, sniffing, reach-for-the-tissues reaction before it goes out of control.



Quercetin is one of the colorful bioflavonoids found in fruits and veggies and has several benefits for allergy relief. Quercetin intercepts the enzymes that release histamine, thus inhibiting its production and potentially avoiding an allergy attack altogether. Quercetin also interferes with prostaglandins, hormone-like substances that incite inflammation and swelling. Like many bioflavonoids, quercetin is target specific and is particular in protecting the upper respiratory system. Plus, it has pain-reducing properties similar to aspirin but without the gastric upset. The power of quercetin is that it can be taken as a preventative measure, making it the number one allergy nutrient before and during allergies.



Bromelain is another fruity helper. An enzyme from pineapple, it supports quercetin in fighting inflammation. Bromelain is proteolytic, meaning it clears out cellular debris to keep cells more functional.

Continued

Allergy Defense...

continued



Vitamin C almost needs no introduction as an important immune system player and as the universal antioxidant. Synergistic vitamin C improves the efficiency of other nutrients, especially bioflavonoids such as quercetin. It, too, has anti-inflammatory properties and assists the control of histamines by breaking them down. What's more, vitamin C (along with pantothenic acid) supports the adrenals, glands which impact overall immunity.

Pantothenic acid (B5). With vitamin C, B5 raises glutathione levels for improved detoxification, white blood cell protection and antioxidant power. B5 is also a precursor to coenzyme A, which helps preserve cell integrity. By its influence on the hormones involved and on adrenal glands, B5 reduces stress and allergic reactions.

Vitamin B6 is involved in more than 100 biochemical enzyme reactions, including those which affect immune response and the fighter white blood cells. The vitamin B family as a whole helps the nervous system to protect against stress which depresses immune function.

Magnesium is a mineral with much to do! Magnesium regulates more than 325 enzymes in the cell. Recent research suggests one of its roles is in quenching C-reactive protein, an enzyme involved in inflammation. Magnesium's lesser known immune hats are in maintaining cell membrane stability and opening bronchial airways. Glycinate is a form which is able to get inside the cell to do the most good biologically. When magnesium, B6 and vitamin C are combined, they are even more effective for antihistamine relief.

Zinc, another cofactor for at least 200 different enzyme processes, is called the immune mineral. Zinc supports vitamin A in defending mucous membranes, including those lining the nose and throat. Too low zinc levels also lower your ability to fight infections.

Nettle Extract is an herbal ally in reducing mucous and nasal congestion, plus clearing out clogged lymph nodes to reduce swelling. It has mild anti-bacterial and diuretic properties to further assist "clean up". The extract also interferes with arachidonic acid synthesis, a known inflammatory agent, and inhibits adrenaline's stress response.

Licorice Extract (4:1) fights production of and clears out mucous as well. Additionally, it soothes a scratchy throat caused by cough and provides bronchial relief, too.

Summary

While many formulations will include one or more of the above nutrients, don't forget about two other immune supporters: Alpha Lipoic Acid (ALA) and vitamin A. Boosting immunity is easy for ALA since it supports the liver's detoxifying effects, backs up vitamins C and E as an antioxidant, plus is a natural in raising glutathione levels, an important antioxidant within the cell. Vitamin A is often called the "skin" vitamin as it protects internal mucous membranes, including those in the nose and throat. In doing so, vitamin A helps resist external challenges. Keeping your immune system healthy is your first defense against invading allergens. And that's nothing to sneeze at!



RESOURCES

1. National Institutes of Health, www.niaid.nih.gov/publications/allergies.htm
2. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. www.aaaai.org
3. American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. www.acaai.org
4. PDR for Health. www.pdrhealth.com
5. Herb Foundation (member research materials)

©2007-2010 TyH Publications (M. Squires)

Health POINTS

Published in *Health Points*. This article is protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without written permission. For information on a subscription, please call TyH Publications, 1-800-801-1406 or write TyH Publications, 12005 N. Saguaro Blvd., Ste 102, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268. E-mail editor@e-tyh.com. For information on TyH products, visit our website at www.e-tyh.com.