



# Allergy Support, Naturally

BY MICHELE FERCHOFF, ND

**A**llergies affect as many as 40 to 50 million people in the United States. Allergic diseases are the sixth leading cause of chronic disease in the United States. An allergy is a hyperactive response of the immune system to certain substances that are “foreign” to the human body. These substances are called allergens, and they can range from food and pollen to drugs and dust. When the body encounters a foreign substance, it reacts by making antibodies or releasing certain chemicals called histamines. When histamines and other substances are released into the system, they cause an inflammatory reaction we call an allergy. The inflammatory reaction affects the tissues and organs: mainly the skin, mucous membranes, lungs, and gastrointestinal tract.

Allergies are something we acquire throughout life, and some people are more susceptible to them than others. A person must have at least one contact with a substance to become sensitive or allergic to it. The most frequent symptoms caused by allergic reactions include: hay fever, fatigue, intestinal gas or pain, abdominal bloating, mood changes, asthma, eczema, contact dermatitis, and hives.

Primary external factors causing allergies are from natural environmental substances like mold, spores, pollen from trees, flowers, and grasses, dust mites, animal hairs, and insects. These allergy-producing substances may cause itching, redness, and fluid (water and mucous) which may affect the eyes, throat, nose, sinuses, bronchial tubes, and lungs.

Any food can be an allergen, with the most common being wheat, milk, eggs, yeast, coffee, and chocolate. These can affect most body systems, but the gastrointestinal, nervous, respiratory, and skin areas are affected the most when allergies occur.

Both environmental chemicals and food additives can cause allergic reactions, including: pesticides, chemical sprays, hydrocarbons, and hundreds of others.

## **Other factors that may lead to allergies:**

### **• Eating habits during the first year of life may impact a baby’s allergy sensitivities**

- Feeding babies solid food too early
- Lack of breast feeding
- Gluten allergies from feeding grains too early such as corn, wheat and oats

### **• Poor digestion**

- Improper chewing
- Poor hydrochloric acid in the stomach
- Lack of pancreatic enzymes and bile
- Excessive fluid intake around meals

### **• Stress**

- Emotional & mental anxiety and fatigue
- Menstrual stress (hormone changes)

### **• Low nutritional levels**

- Vitamins A, C, and E and many minerals help reduce allergies

### **• Excess or repeated contact with particular foods and substances**

- Eating the same food over and over again may indicate the presence of an allergy
- Eating foods that are “craved” – these may be the ones that cause the most allergies

### **• The presence of parasites, worms, Candida albicans, and other bacteria**

Conventional treatment of allergies is most commonly directed to block the immune response. While this approach can provide symptomatic relief, it does nothing to address the underlying cause of the problem. Patients often become dependant on their medication, they suffer from numerous side effects, and most importantly, they worsen their overall health by constantly suppressing the immune system.

## **An allergy protocol must incorporate:**

- allergen avoidance
- body cleansing
- exercise
- diet, and
- vitamin and herbal therapies

Sensitivities should be anticipated and offending substances should be removed from the diet and environment. Body cleansing is an extremely important part of allergy prevention. Making sure the liver is not congested and is detoxing appropriately will reduce the likelihood of developing allergic reactions, and/or will reduce the severity of the allergic reaction. Yakriton, a bovine liver fat extract, has been shown to have anti-histamine and liver detox effects. Physical activity helps cleansing; it brings balance and relieves stress. Dietary exclusions must be tried to reduce the hypersensitivity and excess production of mucus. Exclusions include dairy products, wheat, and refined carbohydrates. If

your diet is lacking basic and vital nutrients, you are more susceptible to allergies. A lack of almost any nutrient increases cell permeability, which causes nutrients to leak from the cells and toxic materials to enter them. Ensure a well balanced diet, high in raw and unprocessed foods, fresh fruit, and vegetables, especially those high in the vitamin C complex.

The vitamin C complex is very important to a healthy diet. One becomes particularly susceptible to allergens when the vitamin C complex is undersupplied. Cofactors, such as bioflavonoids in the vitamin C complex that decreases the permeability of cells, have a powerful antihistamine action and detoxify foreign substances entering the body. The vitamin C complex prevents inflammatory reactions and assists in the production of adrenal hormones needed to combat the stress imposed by allergic reactions. Vitamin complexes—specifically A, C and E—have been found to assist in inhibiting the substances that cause inflammation associated with allergies and asthma, and the vitamin B complex may help stimulate the immune system and reduce inflammation in the lungs.

Herbal treatment can be beneficial by correcting any deficiencies or physiological defects which may be contributing to the allergy or underlying inflammatory reaction. Using herbs like Echinacea to enhance the immune system, Goldenseal as a restorative herb to the gastrointestinal wall, Albizia and Baical skullcap for

their anti-allergic properties, and Chamomile to soothe inflammation will be corrective. The principal anti-allergic herbs for respiratory tract allergies are Albizia, Baical skullcap, Stinging nettles leaf, Eyebright, Feverfew, and Echinacea. Overall treatment must start six weeks before allergy season and continue throughout the allergy season.

Untreated allergies can result in chronic asthma, sinusitis, or dermatologic disorders such as eczema and urticaria. Lifestyle changes, including proper nutrition, supplementation, and herbs, will support the body during an allergic response by maintaining a strong immune system.

#### *About The Author*

*Michele Ferchoff earned her B.S. in biology from the University Wisconsin, La Crosse and then attended the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and Health Sciences, one of four accredited naturopathic medical schools in the country, where she graduated as a N.M.D. in 2002. Michele has several years of practical and clinical experience. She was selected as one of two residents for the National College of Naturopathic Medicine/Standard Process residency program, the first naturopathic residency in Wisconsin's history, beginning in September 2002. Michele is one of only five naturopathic physicians in Wisconsin who have graduated from a four-year accredited naturopathic medical school.*

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