

# New England Wellness Solutions

**Making Better Health Easy**

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## Treating Seasonal Allergies with food and herbs

### Taking advantage of a millennia old system (TCM)

It is springtime and unfortunately the joys of being outdoors can be less so for those who suffer from seasonal allergies. There is no shortage of products in stores to combat the symptoms of this affliction; however, each person has a different experience, so which do you choose? Fortunately, the Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) diagnostic formula breaks down symptoms into easier to understand categories.

The following is a guide to help you maneuver through the season as nature makes its' adjustment:

The most typical presentation of seasonal allergies is: itchy red eyes, runny nose and sneezing. In TCM, this is typically viewed as "heat in the lungs and sinus." We can easily see "red" as signifying heat e.g. fire, stovetops, etc. but "itchy" is a slightly harder read. To better understand the symptom of "itchiness" in this way, imagine an outbreak of poison ivy: redness comes to the skin surface, which can become inflamed (more heat) and is accompanied by an "itchy" sensation.

So, what can we do to counteract a lung-heat allergic reaction? Here is a formula you can try at home:

Plantain, elderberry and spearmint are highly effective at clearing heat from the lung. Before the season begins, elderberry is usually the better choice as it strengthens immunity more powerfully than plantain (a "lawn weed", not a banana.) Once the season is in full bloom, plantain seems more effective at reducing the symptoms (add spearmint on heavier days.) You can use elderberry and plantain together, with a relatively higher dose of elderberry before any symptoms arise and then switching to a higher dose of plantain if symptoms are present.

If there is still a productive or runny nose, try eating more grapefruit and pineapple as they help reduce phlegm without risking infection (i.e. stuck yellow or green phlegm). Avoid or reduce eating stickier or damper fruits like fully ripe bananas and mangos. They help us retain fluid to keep us cool in the heat, but they can add to the problem of a runny nose. Less dairy will aid many as well.

Spicy foods such as radishes, onions, garlic and oregano are great phlegm reducers, but they are also hot in nature. For presentations of lung and sinus heat, you do risk causing congestion if you over use them. If this occurs, eucalyptus and peppermint can help open up the nose and a higher dose of plantain will help clear the infection. If you choose to use spicier foods, drink plenty of water to reduce the likelihood of infections.

You may get a sense that there is a bit of a dance in addressing seasonal allergies. This is because allergic presentations often differ, as do individual lifestyles, diet, etc. The resulting “balancing act” can require expertise, particularly for more severe or chronic cases.

At NEW England Wellness Solutions, we can help reduce the stress and lifestyle restrictions associated with seasonal changes. We use our knowledge of acupuncture and a wide array of herbs to treat both the root cause as well as any allergic symptoms. Seasonal allergies can usually be mitigated without negative side effects. Give us a call at 781-829-9355 if you are having difficulty.

The products mentioned in this article are available in teas, tinctures and syrups, as well as in their natural states. If you are struggling to find them, try looking at Good Health Natural Foods in Hanover and Quincy. By the month of May, plantain will be abundant in Massachusetts and will only cost you the time to pick it. Stop by our offices to see what the plant looks like!

Do note that it is advisable to take herbal remedies 2-4 hours apart from taking any pharmaceutical drugs and that some herbs are cautioned or contraindicated for pregnancy. Extreme caution is recommended for those with prescriptions of coumadin or warfarin. These recommendations apply to many over the counter products, including herbal teas.

Enjoy Spring!

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