

# How to Prevent Seasonal Allergies

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You can develop allergic reactions to just about anything. The most commonly known are seasonal allergies or hayfever. The allergic reaction is brought on by the allergen (the pollen, mold, etc) triggering your mast cells to release histamine. Mast cells are a type of white blood cell that are an important part of our immune system. When the mast cells are triggered by the antigen, they release the histamine into the surrounding area. The histamine causes the blood vessel to become leaky which causes the redness, swelling, and the itchy sensation. Histamine can also cause the lung tissue to constrict leading to the wheezing heard during an asthma attack. Mast cells tend to be found locally in the tissue. A mast cell in your lungs can be sensitive to a different allergen than those found in your skin.

## Common Allergy Symptoms

Runny, itchy nose	Sneezing
Sinus congestion	Hives
Watery, itchy eyes	Itchy ears
Red eyes	Rashes
Itchy throat	Wheezing
Asthma	Dull Thinking

Common treatments for allergies include antihistamines which bind the histamine receptor preventing the effects of histamine. These medications often lead to drowsiness. Some have been formulated to preferably bind to only peripheral histamine receptors thereby decreasing the drowsiness that occurs by the histamine binding to receptors in the brain. Many believe that this is your only option.

Goals to Prevent Allergy Symptoms:

- Decrease allergen load on the body
- Prevent mast cell degranulation of histamine
- Strengthen the vascular system to prevent leakiness
- Increase oral tolerance to allergens

### Decrease Allergen Load

All of the things that your body reacts to is additive on the response to them. For example if you are sensitive to wheat and airborne pollen, you will react more to the pollen if you consume wheat during the same period of time as the pollen exposure. By avoid the food allergens you may have you will react less to the environmental allergens you are exposed to. You want to avoid all the possible allergens you can. It is hard to avoid the pollen so start with the food allergens. Many patients have had less allergy

symptoms by doing a food allergy test and avoiding those foods. If finances prohibit you from getting a food allergy test (\$155), you can avoid the most common allergenic foods: dairy, gluten, soy, eggs, corn. It is especially important to avoid the foods you are sensitive to before and during the time that you develop allergy symptoms. Many people are also sensitive to food colorings and additives.

### Prevent Mast Cell Degranulation

Quercetin, Vitamin C and bioflavonoids work well to prevent mast cell degranulation. They decrease the sensitivity of the mast cell to the allergen. The vitamin C and bioflavonoids also strengthen the blood vessel to decrease its leakiness.

### Strengthen Blood Vessel Integrity

Most antioxidants strengthen the integrity of your blood vessels, decreasing their leakiness. My favorite are blueberries, grapes, turmeric. Foods high in flavonoids are dark green leafy vegetables, deep yellow and orange vegetables. Many of the botanicals that are used for hemorrhoids also help strengthen the vasculature such as yarrow, butcher's broom, comfrey, horse chestnut, etc.

### Increase Oral Tolerance

Nettles, otherwise known as stinging nettles, help reduce the histamine load in the body. When your skin comes into contact with this live plant, the hypodermic like needles on the leaves cause a major histamine reaction leading to hives or a rash. When the leaves are dried the needles fall off so this reaction does not occur. The leaves when taken orally they can prevent allergy symptoms by increasing oral tolerance. Another way to increase oral tolerance is to eat your locally made honey. The bees have come into contact with most of the pollens in the area and carry small amounts of it into the hive where the honey is. When you eat the honey your body alters the reaction you may have to the airborne allergen, decreasing your reactivity to the allergen from then on.

### Additional Tidbits

Eyebright: for decreasing redness, swelling and visual disturbances related to inflammation in the eyes and nasal passages.

Horseradish: opens up the sinuses relieving sinus congestion.

Foods that can decrease allergy symptoms: garlic, nettles, onion, ginger, bamboo shoots, cabbage, beet tops, carrots, leafy vegetables, yams

Vitamin A, B complex, vitamin E and zinc may also be helpful during allergy season.

Nasal irrigation may also be helpful to clear out the allergens present in your nasal cavities.

Homeopathy can also be extremely helpful during allergy season.