

Allergies

What are they and how to reduce their effects naturally?

With the onset of Spring and Summer peering from the horizon, we are probably all looking forward to warmer weather. But for many of us the rising temperatures also herald the onset of hayfever and allergic rhinitis with their accompanying sneezing, swollen eyes, breathing difficulties and general discomfort. Of course, spring and summer are not the only times of year that allergies rear their ugly heads; many of us suffer at different times, even all year round. Here we explore different types, what causes them and what we can do to get some relief.

WHAT ARE ALLERGIES?

An allergy is an immune disorder, where the body overreacts to a substance that normally causes no harm. Allergies come in all shapes and forms, and can affect us at any time in our lives. The most common allergens include pollen, dust, dust mites, animal hair, insect stings, moulds, drugs such as penicillin, metals such as nickel, food additives and chemicals. Foods can also cause allergic reactions, typically shellfish, peanuts, eggs, dairy, wheat, strawberries and chocolate. True allergies, often termed 'atopic', typically run in families and often develop in early childhood. Other allergies and sensitivities can be acquired at any time and are often triggered by over-exposure to or prolonged contact with sensitising substances such as chemicals or foods such as wheat.

ALLERGY OR SENSITIVITY?

Many people believe themselves to have a food allergy, whereas they may in fact have a sensitivity. The difference is that true allergies often cause fairly immediate primary reactions such as swellings, skin rashes or a runny nose. Sensitivity symptoms can occur some hours or even days after exposure and are often secondary such as a headache, blocked sinuses or abdominal bloating. The good news is that sensitivities are often correctible, sometimes through dietary measures alone, whereas true allergies are often life-long. NB long standing sensitivities can sometimes turn into full-blown allergies if left untreated.

LEAKY GUT – WHERE IT CAN ALL START

A less than optimum diet can lead to a build-up of toxins in the bowel causing irritation and inflammation of the gut lining. Yeast overgrowths may penetrate the gut wall causing small holes to appear. Lack of nutrients such as vitamin E and essential fats can lead to poor tissue repair, resulting in further damage to the lining. Eventually the gaps become large enough to allow undigested food molecules to enter the blood stream. These large particles are then treated as foreign invaders, triggering an immune reaction. So-called 'leaky gut' is thought to be one of the prime causes of food intolerance/allergy.

TRY: Aloe Vera Juice helps to ease allergic reactions and reduces inflammation in the gut. *Available from Xynergy.*

HAYFEVER AND ALLERGIC RHINITIS

Hayfever is an allergic reaction to tree, grass or flower pollens in the spring or summer. Symptoms vary from watering, itching, sore, puffy eyes to runny or congested nose and sneezing. Allergic rhinitis is similar to hayfever, but tends to affect people all year round as triggers include dust and atmospheric pollution. Food intolerances are often underlying, particularly wheat or dairy.

TRY:

Nasya Nasal Clear Oil – helps to clear congestion and reduce nasal inflammation

Rosewater eye drops – eases itching and irritation

Peppermint & Pippali Formula – reduces sneezing, itching, mucus, inflammation & irritation

Trikatu 3 Spices – clears mucus, reduces secretions, natural antihistamine. All *available from Xynergy.*

DERMATITIS AND ECZEMA

Although skin allergies are often caused by topical exposure to irritants such as detergents, the cause is often an underlying food sensitivity, usually wheat or dairy so it is well worth trying an elimination diet to see if this relieves symptoms.

Many cosmetics contain a cocktail of chemicals capable of triggering contact dermatitis and eczema. Choose natural skincare products that are free from petrochemicals, propylene glycol, parabens, sulfates, detergents, preservatives, and contain no Sodium Laureth or Lauryl Sulphate.

TRY: The following Xynergy skincare ranges are free from such agents: Trilogy Rose Hip Oil, Neem Team, and Urtekram Pure Balance. All *available from Xynergy.*

AVOIDING ALLERGIES – WHAT YOU CAN DO

Aside from avoiding the substance you are allergic to, there are several things you can do to lessen allergic symptoms. Quercetin, found in garlic and onions, is a natural antihistamine that helps to reduce allergic symptoms. Vitamin C, also a mild antihistamine, boosts immunity, particularly of the respiratory tract so include plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet. Nettle tea helps with all types of allergies, and natural live yoghurt helps to strengthen the immune system and mucous membranes. Try cutting out wheat and dairy to see if this makes a difference to your symptoms. With any skin condition it is a good idea to support the liver. If the liver is not coping well with its job of detoxification, the skin takes over part of the process, leading to spots and rashes including eczema.

TRY: Milk Thistle & Dandelion Root which helps to support and regenerate the liver's cells. Bee Pollen Granules also help to boost the immune system in its fight against allergies, particularly hayfever. Both *available from Xynergy.*

BEE POLLEN

Bee pollen contains around 24% protein and is rich in A and B vitamins, providing the highest levels of folic acid of any other naturally occurring food. Clinical studies suggest that bee pollen can be effective in reducing inflammation of the prostate, boosting energy and stamina, and reducing the allergic symptoms associated with hayfever. One theory is that it desensitises the user to pollens; however, many allergies are to windborne pollens that bees do not collect. Another explanation is that the flavonoid quercetin contained in bee pollen inhibits the release of histamine in the body, in other words acting like a natural antihistamine.