

HERB STOP

May Highlights



Seasonal Allergies

Do you suffer from seasonal sneezes, runny nose, watery and itchy eyes? You are not alone. It is estimated that more than 40 million American people are affected by seasonal allergies. If you don't like using antihistamines or other over-the-counter medicines to relieve your discomfort, herbal medicine can offer a natural alternative. To add to the good news, herbs don't just mask the symptoms, but go to the underlying causes of your allergies. In my experience the following herbs have shown to be very effective:

Stinging Nettles

Nettles have been used for hundreds of years as a food as well as a medicine to treat rheumatism, arthritis, eczema, gout and anemia. The center for integrative medicine at the University of Maryland confirms that Nettles may also be effective for treating certain individuals with hay fever (www.umm.edu). Over the years I have witnessed the positive effects of Nettles in nine out of ten people suffering from seasonal allergies. I always carry a few capsules of Nettles with me wherever I go, just in case I run into friends complaining of seasonal allergies. They often feel relief within 20 minutes after taking 1-3 capsules. The stinging hairs on Nettle are sharp polished spines that contain histamine and formic acid and act as an antihistamine taken internally. Nettles have no known side effects, unlike many over-the-counter antihistamine preparations.

Horseradish

A condiment as well as a strong herb, Horseradish can clear out your sinuses immediately. Very often you will find Horseradish combined with other herbs for the respiratory system.

Eyebright

As the name suggests, Eyebright has been used throughout the ages for eye problems, as well as for the sinuses. As a vaso-constrictor and astringent to the nasal mucous membranes, Eyebright brings relief to frequent sneezing bouts and is also rejuvenating to the eyes. It has a drying effect on upper respiratory mucous membranes.

Amalaki

The most concentrated form of vitamin C in the plant kingdom is found in Amalaki. Vitamin C is known to act as anti-histamine. The nice thing about this fruit is that it does not create acidity in the body; it actually has an alkalizing effect.

Bi Yan Pian

This traditional Chinese herbal formula is a god-send for people with a stuffy nose. Used for allergies and nasal congestion, it opens the nasal passages.

Pe Min Kan Wan

Another traditional Chinese formula used for allergies and nasal congestion, but is more drying than the above.

Is It An Allergy Or A Fungus?

Some people diagnosed with allergies actually have a fungus in their nasal passages. The Mayo clinic research team looked at 210 patients with sinusitis and discovered more than 40 different kinds of fungi in their nasal passages. I've talked to many folks who found relief after using traditional anti-fungal herbs, such as Lomatium, Calendula, Neem and Osha. At the same time, a mild nasal wash with these herbs can speed up the process.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy means treatment using essential oils, or the scents from plants to promote health and well-being. In recent years (1987 - 2001), a large number of essential oils and their constituents have been investigated for their antimicrobial properties against some bacteria and fungi in more than 500 reports. The following essential oils were found to possess the strongest antimicrobial properties among many tested: thyme, oregano, mint, cinnamon, sage and clove (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/). For allergy symptoms many folks have used the following combination of essential oils to get relief: 5 drops Peppermint, 4 drops Cinnamon, 2 drops Clove. Add a few drops to your aromatherapy diffuser in the car or at home, or place 2 drops on each side of your pillow before going to bed at night. Steaming your face with essential oils added to hot water can help as well.