

# How to Fight Allergies

Allergies are a major cause of illness in the United States. As many as 50 million people – about one in five – have allergies. Allergies can be seasonal (worsening during certain seasons of the year, such as pollen allergies in the spring) or perennial (occurring year-round).

## ■ Allergy Symptoms

Allergy symptoms occur when your immune system overreacts to something that is harmless to most people but triggers a reaction in anyone sensitive to it. This substance is known as an allergen.

Common allergens include weed or grass pollen, dust mites, animal dander, mold, insect stings and a variety of food types, such as eggs, shellfish, nuts and grains. If you come into contact with something to which you are allergic, your immune system considers it dangerous and releases histamine to counteract it.

Histamine release can cause a variety of symptoms, including skin rash, headache, sneezing, runny nose, swelling, nausea and diarrhea. The most severe reaction, known as anaphylaxis, can be life-threatening.

If the allergen is something you breathe in, your reaction will most likely affect your eyes, nose and lungs. If the allergen is something you consume you are more likely to have symptoms in your mouth, stomach and intestines.

## ■ Allergy Treatment

When allergens are unavoidable many medicines can help control allergy symptoms. Decongestants and antihistamines are the most common allergy medications. They help to reduce stuffy and runny noses, sneezing and itching. Other medications work by preventing the chemical release that causes allergic reactions. Corticosteroids are effective in treating nasal inflammation.

Unfortunately, all these medication side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, headache, upset stomach, or trouble sleeping may occur. Long-term use of corticosteroids may even cause ulcers, increase the risk of heart disease, decrease bone density, and interfere with immune system regulation.

## ■ Nutraceutical for Allergy Fighting

### ✓ Friendly bacteria

If you suffer from seasonal allergies, reaching for probiotics should be one of your first preventative steps. Our gastrointestinal system can benefit from probiotics leading to better digestion and improved immunity. They can also potentially correct the root cause of allergic reactions.

### ✓ Antioxidants and phytochemicals

Allergens can cause certain cells in the body to produce histamine, and also generate free radicals to interfere with cell signaling pathways and cause the immune system to overreact. Adding antioxidants such as vitamins A, C, and E to your daily nutraceutical supplement can help eliminate free radicals, thereby relieving allergic symptoms. Other phytochemicals such as bioflavonoids derived from natural plants also can help minimize the occurrence of allergies, asthma, and bronchitis by inhibiting mast cell releasing histamine.

### ✓ Fish oil

EPA and DHA from fish oil are essential for fighting allergies, because they possess anti-inflammatory properties. Well-known and useful in treating and preventing heart disease, fish oil also has a beneficial effect on alleviating allergic symptoms. Fish oil

can decrease histamine secretion, increase lung anti-allergy ability, maintain an open airway, increase cellular immune function, and more.

### ✓ Green barley

Green barley helps to regulate immune system balance by assisting it in reaching optimal production of immune cells. By providing an effective and balanced immune defense green barley helps the immune system to fight infection effectively and prevent allergies and asthma.

### ✓ Coenzyme Q10

Reactive oxygen species (ROS) free radicals cause many types of allergies. Many studies report low serum antioxidant levels with CoQ10 significantly lower in allergy and asthma patients. Supplementing with CoQ10 can increase cell oxygen uptake, and also help ease allergy-caused shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

### ✓ Ginkgo Biloba

The most common asthma drug, a selective sympathetic  $\beta_2$ -agonist produces many side effects including tachycardia (rapid heartbeat). The similar chemical structure of ginkgolides to the  $\beta_2$ -agonist enables tracheal dilation and asthma prevention.

