



# PANTRY POST

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## An Allergy Special

Spring has passed through very quickly and as the hay fever season arrives, this reminded us of the rising number of those suffering from allergies! In fact Patrick Holford has indicated that one in two people, including up to 70% of the chronically ill, suffers from a hidden food allergy.



The most common allergens include pets, house dust mites, eggs, milk, wheat, pollen, grass and peanuts. However, one needs to be aware of the difference between an allergic reaction and a food intolerance or sensitivity - an intolerance happens when the unpleasant symptoms occur after eating something the body cannot handle because the digestive system does not produce sufficient quantities of a particular enzyme/chemical needed to break down the food.

Sensitivity is used to describe a reaction to a substance - either a food or airborne, which is an exaggeration of a normal side effect produced by that substance.

### Hay fever and Allergies

**Hay fever, or rhinitis is one of the commonest forms of allergy - around 10 million people suffer in the UK alone!**

It is an allergic reaction to pollen and spores; 90% of sufferers in the UK are sensitive to grass pollen and 25% to pollen from the birch tree. It was virtually unknown before 1800 and has only become common in the last 100 years, hence the probable link to "lifestyle, diet, climate and pollution"!

Conventional treatments include antihistamines, which can cause a number of reactions such as drowsiness and lethargy. Amongst the natural herbal remedies are: Weleda's Rhinodron Nasal Spray is designed to clear blocked noses by flushing out the nasal passages; the solution contains aloe vera to act as a moisturiser to help them. A.Vogel's Luffa Nasal Spray contains seven tropical herbs which have a de-sensitising action to relieve sneezing, coughing and itchy eyes.

Certain herbs such as goldenseal, echinacea, plantago, nettle leaf and yarrow have also been



found to be beneficial. Nettle has an antihistamine effect and butterbur has also been found in trials to be effective in this regard. In fact the British Medical Journal published research in 2002 showing that butterbur petasin extract and antihistamines had similar effects but that butterbur did not cause the side effects experienced by some patients given antihistamines.

Turmeric is another herb which has traditionally been used as an anti-allergic remedy. As mentioned in previous Newsletters, it is the curcumin in turmeric which is suitable for all types of allergic reaction, including rhinitis and gut allergies - which is why it is a common ingredient in Indian cooking!

Weleda and other homeopathic providers provide mixed pollen remedies, which should be taken as preventative measures or to reduce symptoms during the hay fever season. New Era's Combination H contains biochemical salts which are homeopathically prepared. A. Vogel's

Luffa complex is an herbal tincture which is suitable for children over two years old.

## Sneezing and Sniffing

The most common symptoms of an allergic reaction are skin rashes, sneezing, a runny nose, itchy eyes and ears, wheezing, vomiting, coughing, shortness of breath, and a sore palate.



Two per cent of people experience a life threatening whole body allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis.

Therefore, the immune system is the key to avoiding allergies. Atopic allergy sufferers are those who have a greater tendency towards allergy than others. Asthma, eczema and hay fever are often described as the "Atopic triangle" because people who suffer from one condition are more likely to have the other two. Allergy expert and editor of *Foods Matter*, Michelle Berriedale-Johnson, says: "We are suffering from a chemical overload, not just from our diets - we are being hit from all angles".

As well as the impact that bleaches and detergents have on the immune system it has also been found that many of these chemicals are known irritants and allergens. Common household soap powders and detergents can also trigger an attack of asthma and exacerbate the skin condition eczema. For example Ecover washing up liquid comes in two forms; the chamomile one contains whey and that with aloe vera is dairy free.

## Feed that Sneeze!

Many allergy sufferers can improve their symptoms by reviewing their diets. In addition to detoxing to cleanse the system, including foods rich in vitamin C is a good idea as it has an anti-histamine action and helps rid the body of toxins.

A recent study published in *Respiratory Medicine* found that people with asthma who took vitamin C required less of their inhaled medication - Acerola cherry is one of the richest sources of vitamin C. Other beneficial foods for allergy sufferers include garlic, which helps to reduce catarrh; yogurt, which has a mild anti-histamine effect; and green vegetables, which help the body detoxify. Red and yellow peppers, capsicum, are also high in vitamin C and in quercetin, a natural antihistamine. Also increase

your consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables with at least three servings of fruit, a large mixed salad and three portions of vegetables daily. Choose local, organic produce. Local because there will be less depletion of antioxidant nutrients and organic to avoid pesticide residue which itself is an allergen. Eat plenty of these foods raw.

Many of the Atopic triangle sufferers find it beneficial to cut back on dairy and switch to goats, sheep, oat, rice or soya milk products as dairy is mucous forming. In a double blind study of people with hay fever, adding 800iu of vitamin E per day to regular anti-allergy treatment during the pollen season was found to reduce the severity of the hay fever symptoms by 23% compared with the placebo group, plus their regular treatment.

## Calming Allergic Reactions

Vitamin C is the most important anti-allergy vitamin according to Patrick Holford as it is a powerful promoter of a strong immune system, immediately calms down allergic reactions and is also anti-inflammatory.



Blood levels of vitamin C have been shown to be low both in people with treated and untreated asthma. He recommends for everyone an absolute minimum of 1,000mg (1g) a day, although 2,000mg (2g) or more is optimum for most people, whether or not you have allergies. If suffering from allergic symptoms, one might wish to take twice this amount on a regular basis. Since vitamin C flushes through the body within six hours, it is best taken in divided doses, either 1g in the morning and 1g at luncheon or, if you are taking larger amounts, 1g four times a day. You can increase the vitamin C intake through food by eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables - though you would have to eat an enormous amount to receive 2g!

Omega-3 fish oils are according to a study published by the American College of Chest Physicians one of nature's best natural anti-inflammatory nutrients - with as you know countless other benefits besides! After only three weeks taking fish oils, researchers noted that patients' airway inflammation and cellular indicators of asthma had fallen so much that they

did not even reach the threshold level used to diagnose this form of the disease. Although you can and should obtain the fish oils from eating unfried, unbreaded fish, Patrick Holford



recommends supplementing with omega-3 fish oils every day. His suggestion is that you should take the equivalent of 1,000mg of combined EPA and DHA (these are the two most powerful omega-3 fatty acids) a day, or 7,000mg a week.



**Quercetin** is a potent antioxidant that promotes a healthy inflammatory response. Animal studies also show that quercetin regulates histamine production. One study found that of all the flavonoids, quercetin was the most effective at inhibiting histamine. The best food sources are red onions, apples and berries, but if suffering from

allergies then you probably need to supplement with 500mg three times a day if the symptoms are severe, dropping to a daily 500mg once your reaction is under control. This maintenance dose is also effective for reducing allergic potential. The best results are achieved by supplementing 250mg twice a day, with some bromelain (a digestive enzyme from pineapple) and vitamin C.

**MSM** also has many benefits for allergy sufferers. In one study, 55 volunteers diagnosed with seasonal allergies were given 1,300mg of MSM twice daily for 30 days. A significant reduction in symptoms of both the upper respiratory tract (including nasal congestion) and lower respiratory tract (including cough) was seen. Whilst still suffering from any allergic symptoms, or in pain, it is well worth supplementing MSM on a daily basis. While therapeutic intakes go up to 6,000mg a day, Patrick Holford recommends you start with 1,000mg, or half this if in combination with the other anti-allergy nutrients.

**Glutamine** is an essential part of any regime designed to quickly restore healthy mucous membranes and reduce allergic potential. It is also a powerful nutrient for supporting proper

immune function and protecting the liver. For this reason, it is often recommended as part of healing a leaky gut - thereby reducing your allergic potential - but also for anyone experiencing allergy symptoms. As part of a daily anti-allergy regime take 500mg. If a leaky gut is suspected (which usually goes hand in hand with allergies), it is recommended to increase this dose to 8g a day for three weeks.

**Bromelain** is a collection of proteolytic (literally meaning protein breakdown) enzymes found in pineapple stems that have considerable anti-inflammatory and anti-swelling properties. In a double-blind clinical trial, participants given 160mg of bromelain daily experienced significant improvements in nasal drainage, swelling and restored free breathing, compared to those taking a placebo. Advice is to take up to 300mg daily if suffering an allergic reaction or 100mg daily to reduce the allergic potential.

A combination of these anti-inflammatory nutrients provides your best protection.

## Intolerances

The most common foods that cause problems are wheat, gluten (the protein found in wheat, barley and rye and a slightly less allergenic version in oats), dairy foods and eggs. It is possible to test yourself or your child for intolerance using a variety of methods, most of which can be carried out at home. Whilst doing so you might like to also test for 'homocysteine', a test that can determine if you or your child might benefit from additional B vitamins.



*"Speltz sourdough bread filled with Sunflower seeds and Linseed",*

## More on Vitamin D

The second study found that women who spent time outdoors, especially as teenagers, or ingested a lot of vitamin D from their diets or supplements, were a third as likely to develop breast cancer than women with less of the nutrient. "Exposure to vitamin D at the time breasts are developing, particularly around adolescence, might be important," said lead researcher Julia Knight of Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. A report presented at a recent conference in Glasgow suggested half of Britons suffer from a mild vitamin D deficiency. Teenage

girls are thought to be the most vulnerable group with 85% suffering a deficiency during the winter months.

These results support the recent review of evidence by Dr Cedric Garland and colleagues from the University of California who found a statistically significant benefit of vitamin D for reducing risk of colon cancer or pre-cancerous colon polyps, breast cancer, prostate cancer risk and ovarian cancer - these cancers account for the majority of cancer deaths.

What these studies show is that an intake of 25mcg, five times the RDA, confers the best protection against these cancers - indicating that vitamin D could cut risk by up to 50%.

The RDA for vitamin D, which is based largely on what you need for healthy bones, is woefully inadequate for cancer prevention. In fact, the chances are that even if taking supplements with higher-than-RDA-levels, you are probably still not taking nearly enough. There is also the assumption the body can make enough vitamin D if one has sufficient sun exposure. What this study shows is that vitamin D deficiency exists even in sunny Southern California - and may be made worse by too much sunscreen, hats and protective clothing.

The average dietary intake is 4mcg, but this is based largely on a fish-free diet since most people eat very little. Hence the recommendation to eat oily fish three times a week. In addition an egg provides about 1mcg - slightly more if it is an omega-3-rich egg. So eating six eggs a week and fish would probably achieve close to 6.4mcg a day.

Miriam Nelson, professor of nutrition at Tufts University and author of *Strong*

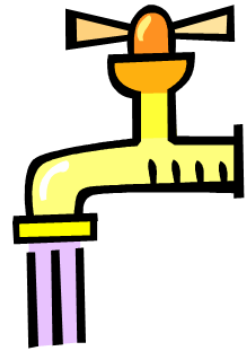


*Women, Strong Bones*, recommends exposing your skin (arms and legs, not face) without sunscreen to the sun for about 10 to 15 minutes a day, which provides the equivalent to some 5mcg of vitamin D.

Food, sun and the better high-potency multivitamins can provide around 17.5mcg a day, so that leaves a shortfall of some 7.5mcg - or 12.5mcg without regular exposure to the sun. Since vitamin D is stored in the body (rather than being excreted daily, like water-soluble vitamins), taking two 25mcg tablets a week would make up the shortfall. There are no safety concerns with vitamin D - even at levels ten times higher than this.

## Water, Water

A recent study headed by Dr Debbie Lawlor of the University of Bristol, published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* indicates a link between high blood pressure and hot weather in infancy.

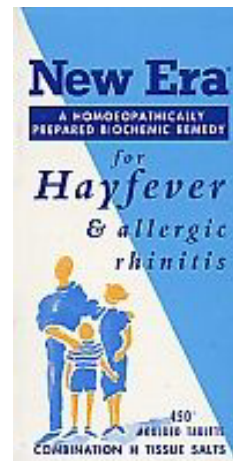


The basis of the study was that individuals born in the early 20th century experiencing the hottest and driest summers during infancy would be more likely to have suffered severe infant diarrhea and dehydration, and consequently have had higher blood pressure in adulthood than those who experienced cooler, wetter summers.

"Animal studies suggest that severe dehydration in infancy results in greater sodium retention and a taste for salty foods throughout life," explains Lawlor. Retention of sodium and hence water would have a survival advantage in a severe drought, but in modern Britain, it may be a disadvantage, causing elevated blood pressure.

## And Finally on Hayfever

Researchers at Satou Hospital in Japan have uncovered a new way to alleviate hayfever symptoms - kissing.



It was already known that relaxation can help allergy sufferers, but in this study, 24 men and women with hayfever were told to spend 30 minutes listening to soft music and kissing their partners. Then the experiment was repeated with cuddling but not kissing.

Researchers found that kissing reduced the body's production of histamine, the chemical produced by the body which triggers the symptoms of hayfever.

Now you just have to convince your partner of the motive!!