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Prepare for Allergy Season with Acupuncture

Acupuncture has been used to treat seasonal allergies for centuries with great success. According to traditional medicine, treatment is directed toward clearing the nasal passages, supporting the immune system and strengthening the systems of the body to prevent allergic reactions from recurring.

What Are Seasonal Allergies?

Commonly called hay fever or allergic rhinitis, a seasonal allergy is an allergic reaction to a trigger that is typically only present for part of the year, such as spring or fall. Pollens that are spread by the wind are usually the main cause of seasonal allergies. People who are allergic to pollens are also often sensitive to dust mites, animal dander, and molds.

Spring is traditionally the main season when allergies blossom because of new growth on trees and weeds. Fall, which ushers in a whole different set of blooming plants, as well as leaf mold, is a close second. Airborne mold spores can be found almost year round, along with other common allergens such as dust, dust mites, and animal dander.

About 26 million Americans endure chronic seasonal allergies, while the number of people with milder symptoms may be as high as 40 million, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Seasonal allergies are caused by the body's hypersensitivity to substances in the environment. Symptoms primarily involve the membrane lining the nose, causing allergic rhinitis, or the membrane lining the eyelids and covering the whites of the eyes, causing allergic conjunctivitis.

While there are many Western medications to treat the symptoms of seasonal allergies, these treatments can cause unwanted side effects, such as drowsiness and immune system suppression as well as an over-reliance on medications. These side effects have motivated many people to search for alternative approaches like acupuncture and Oriental medicine to manage their allergies.

How Acupuncture Treatments Provide Relief from Allergies

According to Oriental Medicine, allergic rhinitis is related to Wind and a deficiency of the *Protective Wei Qi*. *Wei Qi* is the Qi, or energy, that flows at the surface of the body as a protective sheath and is responsible for resistance to colds and other respiratory infections. People with a deficiency of *Wei Qi* catch colds easily and are more susceptible to allergens.

When treating with acupuncture, underlying imbalances within the body are addressed and a treatment plan is developed to relieve the acute symptoms of allergic rhinitis while also treating the root problems that are contributing to the body's reaction to allergens.



In This Issue

- Prepare for Allergy Season with Acupuncture
- Foods for Seasonal Allergies
- Colds and Influenza
- Point: Dazhui

Colds and Influenza



This year there will be 1 billion colds and 95 million cases of influenza in the United States alone. While the misery of colds and flu might be inevitable, one thing is changing: where we look for relief.

Get Better Faster

If you have already come down with a cold or the flu, acupuncture treatments can help relieve symptoms you are currently experiencing including chills, fever, body aches, runny nose, congestion, sore throat and cough. While bringing some immediate relief, treatments will reduce the incidence of an upper respiratory tract infection and shorten the length of the illness.

Treatments often include dietary modification, the use of specifically chosen herbal formulas, and acupuncture.

Seasonal acupuncture treatments just four times a year also serve to tonify the inner organ systems and can correct minor annoyances before they become serious problems. If you experience seasonal allergies, now is the time to schedule an appointment. Call for a consultation today!

Foods for Seasonal Allergies

Ginger: Ginger is a natural antihistamine and decongestant. It may provide some relief from allergy symptoms by dilating constricted bronchial tubes.

Apples: Some foods contain the flavonoid quercetin that can cross-react with tree pollen. Quercetin can reduce allergic reactions by having an antihistamine effect. It also decreases inflammation. Quercetin occurs naturally in certain foods, such as apples (with the skin on), berries, red grapes, red onions, capers, and black tea.

Carrots: Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet is thought to promote inflammation in your airways. Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash, and collard greens.

Omega-3: Omega-3 essential fatty acids can counter the formation of chemicals that cause inflammation of the air passages. Good natural sources include flaxseed oil and salmon.

Yogurt: Food sensitivities seem to be connected with seasonal allergies. In a study conducted at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, patients who were fed 18 to 24 ounces of yogurt a day experienced a decline in their environmental allergic symptoms by 90 percent.

Fiber: A healthy and active colon can decrease food sensitivity, which, in turn, can lighten the burden on your immune system and may reduce the impact of seasonal allergies. For maximum colon health, increase the fiber in your diet.

Genetically Modified Foods - Are They Safe? Part 1

A genetically modified organism (GMO) is created by taking genes from the DNA of one species and artificially forcing them into the genes of an unrelated plant or animal. Most commonly, the genes of bacteria and viruses are introduced into foods such as corn, soy, canola, and cotton.

First introduced into the food supply in the mid-1990s, GMOs are now present in up to 80% of processed foods in the United States. While they are banned as food ingredients in Europe and elsewhere, our own FDA does not even require the labeling of GMOs on our food labels!

Currently, commercially grown GMO crops in the U.S. include soy (93% GMO), cotton (93%), canola (90%), corn (87%), sugar beets (95%), Hawaiian papaya (> than 50%), yellow squash and zucchini (10-30%). There are others and more are on the way.

The U.S. government claims that genetically modified foods are no different from their natural counterparts which have existed for centuries. But this is more of a political rather than a scientific claim. The radical changes being made by bio-technologists could never happen in nature. Because living organisms are highly complex, genetic engineers can't possibly predict all of the effects of introducing new genes into them.

Prevention

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can prevent colds and flu by strengthening the immune system with just a few needles inserted into key points along the body's energy pathways.

If you catch colds easily, have low energy and require a long time to recuperate from an illness your wei qi may be deficient.

Call today to see how Acupuncture can help you!

Point: Dazhui

One particularly important point for supporting the Wei Qi is Dazhui, or Du 14. Translated as "Great Vertebra" in English, it is located below the spinous process of the seventh cervical vertebrae, approximately where the collar of a T-shirt sits on the neck.

Du 14 activates the circulation of blood and Qi to strengthen the outer defense layers of the skin and muscle (wei qi) so that germs and viruses cannot enter through them.

This point is often used to ward off, as well as shorten, the duration colds and flu.

Numerous scientists at the FDA consistently describe these new "foods" as cause for concern. Many scientific study results have echoed their concerns. Food allergies, asthma, reproductive failures, organ failure, and higher death rates are just some of the findings of animal studies. From the safety tests that have been conducted, the results are disturbing, to say the least.

The physicians of the American Academy of Environmental Medicine have called on all physicians in the U.S. to warn their patients about the dangers of GMO foods. Biologist David Schubert of the Salk Institute warns that "children are the most likely to be adversely affected by toxins and other dietary problems" related to GMO foods. He states that without adequate studies, the children become "the experimental animals". Pregnant women are also at greater risk.

The process of genetic engineering can introduce dangerous new allergens and toxins into foods that were previously naturally safe. Already, one genetically engineered soybean was found to cause serious allergic reactions, and bacteria genetically engineered to produce large amounts of the food supplement, Tryptophan, have produced toxic contaminants that killed 37 people and permanently disabled 1,500 more.

When GMO soy flour was fed to female rats, most of their babies died within 3 weeks. And likewise, male rats that were fed GMO corn or soy experienced testicular discoloration, damaged sperm cells, DNA function alterations, fewer offspring, and smaller babies.

Some U.S. farmers have reported that thousands of their pigs, cows, or bulls have had reproductive complications including infertility or sterility after GMO corn consumption. In India, most buffalo that ate GMO cottonseed also had reproductive issues similar to U.S. animals.

Interestingly, in the U.S. human population, the incidence of low birth weight babies, infertility, and infant mortality are all escalating. That coincides with our increased consumption of genetically modified foods. Could there be a connection?

Unlike safety evaluations for drugs, there are no human clinical trials of GMO foods, which I find shocking, given the potential for harm. The only published feeding experiment revealed that the genetic material inserted into GMO soy transfers into bacteria living inside our intestines and it continues to function. This means that long after we stop eating GMO foods, we may still have their GMO proteins produced continuously inside us. Sounds scary to me! The FDA and the food industry are not looking out for our best interests in this case. We all need to educate ourselves about the dangers of eating genetically modified foods.

In part 2 of this article next month, I will provide additional information on genetically modified foods and also I'll provide you with ways you can avoid GMOs as much as possible.

To your continued good health,

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