

Are You Feeling Stuffed Up?

Open Your Sinuses and Breathe Freely Again with Natural Remedies

Are you among the 7% of the people who have trouble breathing because of allergies to pollen, dust, animal dander or mold, a condition known as allergic rhinitis? Maybe your nose is stuffed due to non-allergic irritants, a condition known simply as rhinitis. Or you could be one of the 13% of the population suffer from chronic inflammation of the sinuses (sinusitis). If you experience congestion in the upper respiratory system, you know the frustration you can feel from not being able to breathe freely through your nose.

Unfortunately, many of the treatments offered by modern medicine for these conditions offer only symptomatic relief, so people often struggle with them for many years. Fortunately, there are ways to move beyond symptomatic relief and correct the underlying causes of these conditions. In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*, we'll offer suggestions about what you can do to permanently relieve these conditions and start breathing freely again.

Rhinitis

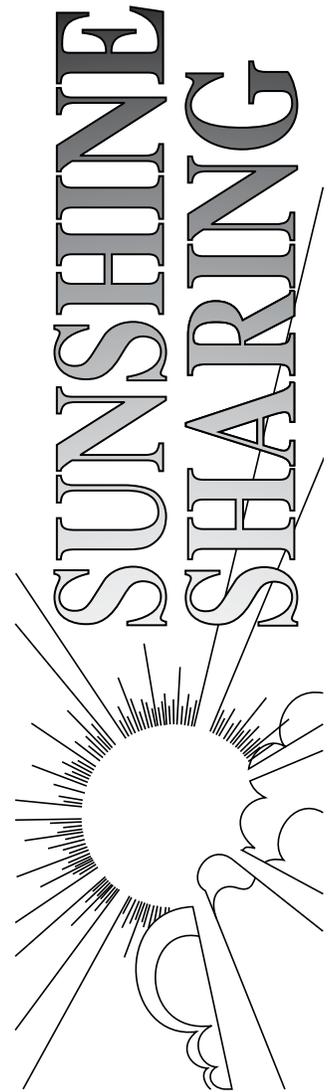
Spring is a wonderful time of the year, unless you're allergic to pollen, a condition commonly known as hay fever. An adverse reaction to pollen is just one cause of allergic rhinitis, a condition involving inflammation of the sinuses, eyes and throat. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis include sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, itching, coughing, watery or itching eyes, and a sore or scratchy throat. The allergic reaction can also be associated with dark circles under the eyes, headaches, skin problems, excessive fatigue and even digestive irritation.

Allergic rhinitis is caused by an overly sensitive immune response reacting to substances in the environment. The immune system overproduces immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies. When antibodies attach to an allergen, it causes your body to release histamine, which triggers inflammation. It also triggers the sinus discharge, watery eyes and sneezing, all which are attempts to flush the irritating substances away from the eyes, nasal passages and sinuses.

The inflammatory reaction can also make the eyes red and itchy. Excess mucus production in the sinuses can create pain and pressure. Drainage into the throat can result in coughing and sore throat. As post nasal secretions are swallowed into the stomach, they can even irritate the digestive tract, resulting in gas, loss of appetite and abdominal discomfort.

Hay fever, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, occurs during specific seasons of the year and is always caused by pollen. Tree and grass pollens, as well as pollen from flowers like ragweed, plantain and dandelion, are common culprits.

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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Important Notice

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When rhinitis symptoms occur year-round, the allergic reactions are caused by irritants other than pollen, such as dust, dust mites, animal dander, feathers and mold. There is also a form of non-allergic rhinitis that can be caused by household cleaning agents, cosmetics, perfumes and other chemicals.

Antihistamines

Since histamine is what triggers the allergic response, many people take antihistamines to block it and ease rhinitis. These medications are not without side effects. The most common are dizziness, drowsiness and a thickening of mucus secretions, which makes the mucus (and the irritants it is trying to flush away) more difficult to expel. Other side effects are rare, but include headaches, malaise, constipation and dry mouth.

For more natural symptomatic relief, bitter orange peel acts as a natural antihistamine. It contains the alkaloid synephrine, which dries up excess mucus secretions. It also acts as a metabolic stimulant. Unfortunately, it also dries up mucus secretions which makes it harder for the body to flush out irritating substances.

Reducing Allergic Reactions

There are other ways to inhibit allergic reactions and ease rhinitis besides blocking histamine. Four effective remedies are nettle leaf, vitamin C, quercitin and eyebright.

Nettle leaf actually contains histamine, but for unknown reasons it also reduces histamine reactions in the body. Taking nettle leaf regularly helps to desensitize mast cells, the immune cells that release histamine, so the body doesn't overreact to minor irritations.

Vitamin C doesn't block histamine reactions, but it does break down histamine more rapidly, thus reducing levels of histamine in the body. Vitamin C is also anti-inflammatory, which means it reduces the inflammatory symptoms of rhinitis.

Quercitin is a bioflavonoid that also helps to stabilize mast cells making them less reactive. It works well in combination with vitamin C and is found in a number of foods that are also rich in vitamin C. Examples of foods high in quercitin and vitamin C include red onions, red apples, grapes, berries and cherries. Elderberries are a good source of quercitin, too, and also have a decongestant and antiallergic effect.

Eyebright is a mild astringent that is very helpful for calming down the inflammatory reactions in allergic rhinitis. It is helpful where there is thin, watery mucus drainage, itching nose, and red and itchy eyes. It combines very well with nettle leaf for easing upper respiratory allergies and irritation.



Other remedies that can be helpful for allergic rhinitis include burdock, goldenrod, ambrosia and yerba santa. Burdock also helps to stabilize mast cells. Ambrosia, also known as ragweed, is a common source of pollen allergy, but oddly enough it acts to desensitize the body to pollen when taken internally.

These remedies will typically work better in combination, so look for a natural *Anti-Allergy* or *Antihistamine formula* with some of these ingredients. When taking any of these remedies drink extra water, as staying hydrated is very important to both preventing and relieving rhinitis as we discuss below.

The Vital Importance of Water



Normally mucus traps irritating particles and allows them to be swept off the surface of the membranes. Tears wash away irritants from the eyes. When a person is dehydrated, their mucus membranes and eyes can be dry. This allows irritants to sit on the membranes. In response, the body creates an inflammatory reaction, driven by histamine, which draws water into the tissues to flush the irritants from the nose, eyes and throat.

Thus, staying well hydrated by drinking lots of water can greatly reduce allergic reactions. Since mucus and tears contain salt, taking a pinch of natural salt with several glasses of water helps rapidly flush the irritants from the tissues.

You can also make a natural anti-inflammatory and anti-allergenic drink by adding some lemon juice, sweetened with maple syrup, and a liquid *Antioxidant formula*, containing mangosteen, lycium, grapes and other fruits, to a quart of water. Drinking this hydrates the body, reduces inflammatory reactions, and supplies quercitin and vitamin C to calm down allergic reactions.

Homeopathic Remedies

Homeopathy addresses the hypersensitive reaction the body has to the allergen. By giving diluted doses of remedies that can cause allergy-like symptoms, homeopathic remedies can desensitize the immune system so that it no longer overreacts.

Look for an appropriate homeopathic remedy made from the substances that trigger your allergies. Sometimes you can find locally-made homeopathic remedies from the pollen of local species known to cause allergic reactions. You may also be able to find homeopathics for dust, mold, animal dander and other sources of irritation.

Many people with pollen allergies have been able to achieve an effect similar to that of homeopathic remedies by taking bee pollen internally. This actually helps diminish allergic reactions to pollen. Locally sourced pollen works the best. Start by taking a very small amount (just a few grains) and gradually work up to several capsules a day. You can also try using locally-grown honey which has not been filtered to remove the pollen.

Sinusitis

Sinusitis can cause thick nasal discharge, postnasal drainage, difficulty breathing through your nose, a reduced sense of taste and smell as well as pain and tenderness around the eyes, nose, cheeks and forehead. It can also contribute to ear pain, coughing, sore throats, bad breath and fatigue.



Acute sinusitis is typically due to an infection. If the mucus is white, the infection is probably viral. If the mucus is yellow in color, it may be bacterial. Chronic sinusitis may be bacterial, but is more commonly fungal in nature.

Although antibiotics are commonly recommended for sinusitis, both acute and chronic, they rarely have a positive effect. They definitely don't work if the problem is viral or fungal.

Natural Antimicrobials

Fortunately, there are several natural antimicrobials that can help to rid the body of sinusitis when infection is the problem. A very simple way to clear the infection from the nasal passages is to use a nasal wash with salt water or **liquid silver**. (Use one or the other, not both, as the salt negates the effect of the silver.) You can use a neti pot for this or even a nasal syringe. You can also use liquid silver as a nasal spray.

Another effective remedy is to use essential oils. These can be inhaled directly from the bottle or inhaled in steam. Bring a pot of water to a boil, then remove it from the stove. Add some essential oils to the water and inhale the steam. Some of the most effective oils for both fighting the infection and decongesting the sinuses are eucalyptus, pine, thyme, rosemary, and ravintsara.



In chronic sinusitis, people sometimes develop nasal polyps, small pockets of pus inside the sinus cavities. An effective, although somewhat uncomfortable remedy, is making a sinus snuff. Mix equal parts bayberry rootbark and goldenseal powder and then snuff the mixture up the nose. This not only fights the infection, it shrinks nasal polyps and also helps mucus to drain from the sinuses.

Decongesting the Sinuses

To help decongest the sinuses so that the mucus will drain properly and open up the air passages there are a number of helpful herbs. The most effective is the simple combination of fenugreek and thyme. This not only helps clear the sinuses, it also helps relieve sinus pressure and sinus headaches. Other herbs that help are yerba santa, horseradish and burdock. A helpful combination is *Christopher's Sinus Formula*, which contains burdock, goldenseal and bitter orange.

Digging Deeper for Root Causes

Much of what we've discussed so far about sinus problems and respiratory allergies dealt with relieving the obvious symptoms and causes. There are deeper issues to consider if you want permanent relief.

For starters, reducing your exposure to respiratory irritants will be helpful. There is also a strong link between the health of the digestive tract and the health of the lungs and sinuses. Problems with food allergies and sensitivities, intestinal dysbiosis, and leaky gut syndrome can also be linked with sinus and lung problems. Therefore, make sure to consider the following strategies for working on the underlying causes of upper respiratory problems.

Avoid Respiratory Irritants

It's pretty obvious that the place to start in getting relief from rhinitis is to remove the source of the respiratory irritants, whenever possible. This may also help to ease sinusitis. The more background irritation there is, the more sensitive and reactive the tissues will be.

For starters, get rid of toxic household cleaning products and other toxic household chemicals. There are people who clean homes for a living who have "cured" their breathing problems by switching to more natural, and less toxic, products.

If air pollution is a problem in your area, consider installing some type of air filtration system in your home. This may be helpful for both allergic and non-allergic rhinitis. At the very least, change your furnace filter regularly to help reduce the circulation of dust and other irritants.

Eliminate Allergy-Causing Foods

Allergic reactions to foods in the intestinal tract will hypersensitize the immune system elsewhere in the body, making you more susceptible to respiratory allergies and inflammation. The most common food allergies that may be contributing to rhinitis and chronic sinusitis are dairy products and wheat, but other allergens like corn, citrus, eggs, peanut butter, shellfish and soy may be a problem for some people

Signs that indicate food allergies may be a contributing factor in respiratory congestion include the following symptoms (especially if they occur after eating): dark circles under the eyes, redness of the ears, face or eyes, a glassy look, an increased

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Additional Help and Information

For more information about how to clear your sinus problems so you can breathe freely contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

Strategies for Health by Steven Horne

Blood Type, pH and Nutrition Charts by Steven Horne

Sinus Relief Now by Jordan S. Josephson

Breathe Free by Daniel Gagnon and Amadea Morningstar

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pulse rate, bloating, fatigue or mood changes. If a person craves certain foods excessively, they may be allergic to them.

If you suspect food allergies may be contributing to your respiratory allergies, eliminate all suspected allergy-producing foods or do a short fast for two or three days. If symptoms improve, then food allergies are probably an underlying factor. Reintroduce suspected foods one at a time and watch for symptoms or reaction.

Avoid Salicylates and Food Additives

Salicylates (natural aspirin compounds) are common in many foods and herbs, but some people develop an intolerance for them, especially when they are exposed to other food additives. Sensitivity to salicylates and food additives can contribute to chronic sinus problems, asthma and the formation of nasal polyps. You may find that reducing the amount of salicylates in your diet as well as avoiding food additives helpful.

Reduce Systemic Inflammation

Since allergies and sinusitis involve inflammatory responses, remedies that reduce inflammation in general may be helpful. In addition to vitamin C, the fat soluble vitamins A and D are very important for the health of mucous membranes and can be beneficial. Some people have also found MSM and Co-Q10 helpful in calming down allergic reactions.

Heal the Intestinal Tract

For many people, the ultimate solution to their stuffed up nose is to fix their stuffed up intestinal tract. Imbalances in the friendly microbes of the GI tract, intestinal inflammation, constipation and a widening of the gaps in the intestinal membranes, known as leaky gut syndrome, will all contribute to problems with the respiratory system.



The Chinese associate both the colon and the lungs with the metal element, which is related to the body's ability to defend itself. This makes sense, because the mucus membranes lining the respiratory and digestive systems are the primary lines of immune defense.

To find out if your intestines are causing, or at least contributing to, your sinus problems start by doing a colon cleanse, such as *Ivy Bridges Cleansing program* or the *Chinese Balanced Cleansing program*. If you find your sinuses less congested after the cleanse, you need to work on healing your gut to clear your sinuses.

Start by taking a *Digestive Support formula* containing betaine hydrochloric acid (HCl), pepsin, papain, bile salt, pancreatin, amylase, lipase and bromelain. Bromelain, a protein-digestive enzyme from pineapple, can be helpful for allergies.

Also take something to knock down unfriendly microbes in your intestinal tract, such as berberine, cinnamon, goldenseal or pau d'arco. Eliminate simple carbohydrates, especially refined sugar, as this feeds the unfriendly microbes. You can also take *Bacillus coagulans*, a probiotic that will help alter your friendly flora.

Next, try a *Gut Healing Fiber formula* containing psyllium hulls, inulin and l-glutamine to help repair your intestinal membranes. You may also want to take a good probiotic supplement.

It takes about three to four weeks before you'll start seeing significant results, but cleaning out the colon and restoring intestinal health with probiotics, enzymes and fiber and anti-inflammatories has helped many people obtain permanent relief from both respiratory allergies and chronic sinusitis.