



## Integrative Allergy Tree GatorMD.com

If someone in your family suffers from allergies, you are not alone. 1 in 5 people, or an estimated 50 million Americans suffer from allergies. Over the last 50 years, it has become even more common suggesting there are likely some environmental or behavioral triggers. Most people who are struggling with an allergy go to the doctor to be treated and are routinely given pharmaceuticals from acetaminophens to antihistamines which can often be helpful but does not treat the underlying issues.

The holistic approach to allergy management combines multiple approaches. It is important to monitor and treat acute episodes and symptoms, manage allergens and strengthen and balance our immune system. In this disorder, the body is in an inflammatory state. Some individuals have a very specific trigger in which case avoidance of that inflammatory antigen is key. For most people though, no single, specific trigger is identified and symptoms are more generalized. Imagine that your body is a bucket with a hole in the bottom that is slowly filling with water and emptying out of the bottom. The water is a symbol for the inflammation in your body. If water flows in slowly, the body can handle it and water flows out the bottom and the bucket never overflows. But if there is too much water (inflammation) pouring in, the bucket can overflow and cause symptoms. Our goal with allergy management is to decrease the baseline inflammation (water in the bucket), so we have more of a buffer for when inflammation increases.

Let's tour the branches of the healing tree and discuss the variety of ways we can improve our allergy control naturally. Please do not make any changes without first speaking to your doctor. Never remove or change any medications without first consulting with your physician. These recommendations are meant to complement (but not replace) your current therapy.

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## The Healing Tree

### *Branch #1- Nutrition*

Nutrition is truly the cornerstone of our health. Excessive and unhealthy eating leads to overweight and obesity and nearly all health conditions are worsened. In traditional Chinese medicine, the lungs are intimately related with the large intestine and any issues with digestion can affect the lungs.

Eating an anti-inflammatory diet is recommended. This means eating more fruits, vegetables, fiber, whole grains, organic meats, fish and drinking water. You should include garlic, lemons, bone broth, raw honey/bee pollen (if over 1 year old), apple cider vinegar. You shouldn't consume large amounts of processed foods, preservatives, coloring or dyes, butter/margarine, dairy, gluten, artificial flavors, and soda or juice.

Food can trigger asthma and allergies. It is prudent to avoid known triggers. Consider working with a nutritionist and trialing an elimination diet (restrict major allergenic foods such as gluten, dairy, soy, corn, nuts, shell fish for a few weeks). There is some evidence that compounds in onions, red peppers, spicy foods or spices such as horseradish, mustard and chili peppers reduce histamine release.

### *Branch #2 – Physical Activity*

The cardiovascular benefits of exercise are well known. Swimming is an excellent exercise for those with allergies. In Ayurvedic (Indian) Medicine, yoga is recommended as a comprehensive approach to healthy living. Particularly, pranayama or yogic breathing exercises can be helpful in improving symptoms. Everyone should aim for 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise at least two times a week, but you can never really have enough, so get outside and have fun!

### *Branch #3 – Environment*

Avoid known triggers as much as possible including tobacco smoke, pets, cockroaches, mold, and dust mites. To reduce airborne triggers and dust mites, purchase a HEPA air filter, dust mite proof bedding, remove or treat as much carpeting and drapery as possible, especially from the child's room. Clean the home frequently. Use

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hypoallergenic bedding and change and wash them weekly with warm water. If you have a pet allergy, do not allow the pet to sleep in your room. Keep the windows closed between 6am-12pm when pollen counts are the highest. Run a dehumidifier in your room. Both dust mites and mold thrive in humid environments.

You can add air cleaning plants to your home. Some examples of those include: Spider Plants, Philodendrons, Garden Mum, Dracaena, Ficus/Weeping Fig, Peace lily, Boston Fern, Snake Plant, Bamboo Palm, Aloe Vera, Gerbera Daisy, Golden Pothos, and Chinese Evergreen.

#### ***Branch #4 – Sinus Rinses***

Try a sinus rinse using a saline solution and spraying it in the nose and suctioning out. There are numerous salt water nose sprays available at all pharmacies. There is also a great nasal spray called Xlear that contains Xyletol and saline. You can make some of your own at home by mixing salt in water. Make sure that the water is distilled and as sterile as possible. Tap water is full of chlorine and fluoride and can actually aggravate your sinuses, so it should be avoided if possible. Try pink Himalayan salt for added benefit.

You can also try using a **Neti Pot**. Use of neti pots has been shown to help improve quality of life in sufferers of respiratory illnesses and cause little to no side effects by clearing the nasal passages of allergens and irritants. This form of “sinus irrigation” originated in the Ayurvedic medical tradition thousands of years ago.

#### ***Branch #5 – Mind/Body***

Stress can be a major trigger of allergy. Mind body therapies to reduce stress include meditation, autogenic training, guided imagery, biofeedback, hypnosis, and music therapy.

#### ***Branch #6- Allergy Testing and Desensitization***

Consider obtaining allergy testing to elucidate any sensitivities you may have. If appropriate, allergic desensitization therapy can be very helpful for children who are triggered by specific airborne or food allergens.

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## *Branch #7 – Supplements*

- A) Vitamin C – Naturally obtained in citrus fruit and strawberries. It has been shown to decrease exercise induced asthma and allergies by as much as 50%.
- B) Vitamin D – Supplementing can reduce the risk of a flare by up to 50%.
- C) Magnesium – It can significantly reduce symptoms. It is a natural bronchodilator and mast cell stabilizer. Try to increase magnesium in the diet (beans, lentils, cereal, nuts, brown rice, spinach).
- D) Omega 3 Fatty Acid – It has been shown to decrease allergy symptoms as DHA reduces inflammation. Consider two meals per week of organic salmon, mackerel, sardines, or tuna.
- E) Probiotics increase the amount of good bacteria in our gut, decrease inflammation and help us digest and absorb food more easily. Klaire, Florastor Kids, Nature's Way, Culturelle, Metagenics and Orthomolecular make excellent probiotic supplements.
- F) Stinging Nettle- Research has shown that stinging nettle leaf naturally controls histamines. You can take a freeze-dried preparation before hay fever season begins. It can also be used as a tea or in tincture form.

## *Branch #8 – Herbs*

There are a number of herbs that may be useful for allergies. Licorice root, Chinese skullcap, angelica, and cordyceps have been shown to decrease inflammation. Kan Herbs, makes an excellent product for children called windbreaker which uses multiple Traditional Chinese herbs.

Turmeric is used for numerous conditions in Ayurvedic medicine and has very powerful anti-inflammatory effects. Consider drinking golden milk. There are many variations of golden milk, but generally it combines milk (almond, coconut, dairy, etc), turmeric, cinnamon and honey (if above 1 year old). You can google many recipes. Check out an example at [wellnessmama.com](http://wellnessmama.com).

Quercetin, Bromelain and stinging nettle have anti-histamine and anti-inflammatory actions. Ortho Molecular makes an excellent chewable, D-Hist Junior, that contains all

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of these with vitamin C and NAC (though there are some preservatives so please read the label to ensure you are ok with the ingredients).

A traditional tea used in Ayurveda and TCM is licorice tea. Use 1 teaspoon of licorice root, and boil in cup of water. Add 5-10 drops of mahanarayan oil or ¼ teaspoon of ghee. Take sips q5-10 min if having asthma exacerbation or drink daily for prevention.

Home steam inhalation can help soothe irritated airways. Thyme, eucalyptus or frankincense can be added for additional benefit. Caution should be taken with adding oils to steam inhalation as some may exacerbate symptoms.

### *Branch #9 – Therapies*

Massage has been shown to help relax patients and improve allergy symptoms. Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years in China to treat allergy. You can also learn to massage the appropriate points and give massages daily.

### *Branch #10 – Homeopathy*

Common allergy homeopathics include Sabadil by boiron. There are no published scientific control trials showing evidence of efficacy of these treatments though there is anecdotal evidence of their benefit in some people. Boiron makes excellent homeopathic products. At the beginning of a viral illness, consider using Coldcalm or oscillocoquinum to help prevent the cold from worsening and from triggering an increase in allergy symptoms.

## **Precautions When Treating Allergies**

When allergies are mild or moderate, they are usually not very threatening and go away with time. However, severe allergic reactions can be dangerous and require immediate medical attention. Anaphylaxis is the term for a severe allergic reaction, which can happen due to contact an allergen and require immediate medical attention

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