

H A N D L I N G SPRING (HAY)

The National Institute of Health's branch of Allergy and Infectious Diseases report that 40 to 50 million Americans suffer from allergies in one form or another. Many experience food allergies that are treated somewhat differently from hay fever allergies. Hay fever comes from airborne allergens, generally from pollen or pollutants.

by Dr. Paul Barney

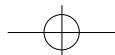
The symptoms of allergy occur when an immune system is overactive. The immune system often recognizes something as foreign and treats it as foreign by attacking it, when in fact it really isn't a substance the body should be concerned with. This over-activity of the immune system leads to the release of substances including histamine that cause the symptoms of hay fever.

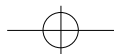
The most common symptoms include a runny nose and itching eyes and scratchy throat. Sometimes, an allergy will precede a sinus infection by causing swelling in the nasal membranes preventing fluids from exiting the sinus passages. An infection then ensues. However, most people who feel pressure over their sinuses, never develop an infection and so can be adequately treated with the supplements mentioned here. Many people experience a tickle or a shallow cough that comes from the throat rather than the lungs. They may also experience a change in

emotions, becoming quite irritable or moody.

These airborne allergies can often be grouped by season. Those people sensitive to tree pollens usually have more severe allergies in the springtime. Those sensitive to grasses are often worse in mid-summer. Those allergic to weeds have their symptoms peak in the fall. There are some unfortunate people who have allergies all summer long who may be allergic to a few plants in each group. Those who have symptoms of allergies all winter long probably are allergic to molds and mildew or household animals and dust mites. On occasion, it takes a real detective to determine from where the allergies come.

There are several methods used to diagnose a cause of an allergy. In a scratch test, drops of an allergen are put on small scratches on the arm or the back. A reaction is considered positive if swelling or redness occur around the scratch. A





blood sample can also be used to measure antibody response to certain allergens. It is often helpful to determine the allergen which cause the hayfever to reduce the symptoms. There are also practitioners who use kinesiology or electronic devices to determine the cause of allergies.

The most common treatment of allergies is with antihistamines. Their side effects include drowsiness and drying of the mucous membranes of the nose and mouth. Many of the newer prescription antihistamines don't cause drying but often have serious drug interactions and the consumer must be very careful in combining the prescription antihistamines with antifungal drugs, and blood thinning as well as asthma medication.

There are some natural products that can be taken to decrease allergy symptoms. They are often equally effective without the side effects of antihistamines.

QUERCETIN

One of the more popular is quercetin. Quercetin is a bioflavonoid found in red apples, red onions, brussels sprouts, kale, peas, bell peppers, pears and asparagus. It is also found in bee pollen and propolis, two plant materials found in the beehive.

It is possible to consume a fair amount of quercetin through your diet. If you have allergies, however, diet is often not enough and you may need a supplement to get enough quercetin to control your symptoms. It appears quercetin decreases allergic symptoms by stopping the release of histamine. If you start taking quercetin and other nutritional supplements I will mention below before an allergy attack, they are likely to be more effective. However, don't let that discourage you from taking them even after the symptoms have

started. A common dose is 300mg to 600mg per day.

BROMELAIN

Bromelain is a nutrient often extracted from pineapple. Found in many digestive formulas, it is an enzyme that helps absorption. If it is found in a combination formula, chances are, it is there to help with the absorption of the other nutrients such as quercetin. Bromelain also has an anti-inflammatory effect. When someone develops allergy symptoms, part of the reason is due to the inflammatory response to substances such as histamine that are released as the allergy takes hold. This causes inflammation in the tissues which then manifests with redness and swelling.

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C is useful in many conditions including hay fever. Higher doses are often required in the treatment of allergies: 2,000mg is beneficial and you can take up to 4,000mg or more during acute symptoms. It also stabilizes capillaries, reducing the swelling in the throat, nasal passages and around the eyes. If you are taking a multi-vitamin or a combination product that contains Vitamin C, I still recommend additional supplementation.

NETTLE (URTICA DIOICA)

Stinging nettle is probably a plant many are familiar with, especially if it has come into contact with your skin, but it also has an historical use in the treatment of allergy. In fact, in double blind studies it was shown to decrease the symptoms of allergy, specifically runny nose.

EPHEDRA (MA HUANG)

The active component of the ephedra herb is ephedrine, an alkaloid. It is used in OTC asthma medication. As a natur-

al herb, ephedra in small doses can be very useful in decreasing the symptoms of colds, asthma, cough and in this case, hay fever. It is in many Chinese and American formulas that I use and I feel very comfortable using 100mg to 200mg of ephedra that contain small doses of 2.5mg to 8mg of ephedra alkaloids per day. I feel comfortable using dosages of up to 15mg of ephedra alkaloids.

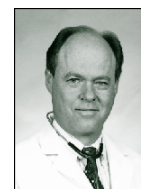
FEVERFEW

Feverfew is another herb with a variety of uses. You will find it in headache formulas, in fever reducing formulas, and many hay fever formulas. Like bromelain, it has an anti-inflammatory effect and reduces the swelling that occurs during a hay fever attack.

Homeopathic formulas can also be useful to reduce hay fever. There is no reason why the herbs I've mentioned cannot be combined with homeopathic formulas. You may want to take them at separate times of the day.

So, if you suffer from hay fever, don't give up. You can use these nutrients singly or in combination. You can take a formula that contains all of them and then add to that additional vitamin C for instance, or additional nettle. It may require trial and error to find the right amounts in combination that will work for you. ■

Biography of D. Paul Barney, MD



Dr. Paul Barney completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology at Brigham Young University. He earned his medical degree from the University of Utah. Since completing his internship residency in family practice in 1982, Dr. Barney has been in private practice doing primary care family practice and emergency room medicine. He is also an adjunct professor at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. He has lectured extensively about natural medicines. His book, [Clinical Applications of Herbal Medicine](#), was published in 1996 and his newest book, [Doctor's Guide to Natural Medicine](#), is now in its second printing. Dr. Barney has been using herbs in his medical practice for over six years.

