

Allergy season coming into bloom

By Mandy Kendall

The Vernal Equinox at the beginning of this week announced the official end of winter and heralded the beginning of spring. Great news for the sun worshipers, but not so great for the more than 40 million Americans who suffer from seasonal allergies.

The unseasonably warm weather so far this year has also meant that the allergy season has been afflicting many people much earlier than usual.



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Allergens (a substance that causes an allergic reaction) come in all shapes and sizes and from different sources including animals, insects, pollens, materials and foods. All allergy sufferers will have their own tactics to deal with the often-daily onslaught of itchy running eyes, stuffy blocked noses and lack of sleep. Often remedies will include medications, and lots of them, however there are plenty of things that can be done to limit your exposure and boost your immunity too.

So, here are this week's *Qwik-e* tips on how to help protect you against those pesky, fun spoiling, sleep depriving allergens:

Get tested – If we know exactly what it is that irritates us, we can be much more focused, and effective, in eliminating it from our lives. (This can be said for most things I think.)

Pets – If you have a pet with fur, short of shaving your beloved friend, there are other ways to minimize the affect their fur and dander (dead skin) can have on you. Keep them clean and brushed, especially when they've been outside and are trying to bring half of the forest back into the house. Try rubbing them vigorously with a towel outside before letting them indoors. (Wear a protective mask if you're the one with the allergy!) Also your hair can trap plenty of pollen and dust while you're outside, so try wearing a hat or washing your hair before you go to bed (or at least brushing it out well). Keeping pets out of our bedrooms and off our sofas can also make a huge difference to the amount of allergens present in the areas where we spend a lot of our time.

Allergens in the home – I hate cleaning, but it has to be said that regular vacuuming and dusting (with a slightly damp cloth to capture the dust rather than just moving it around!) will do a lot to reduce the amount of allergens around your living space.

Nasal rinsing – A simple saline solution will help rinse out the majority of irritating allergens and a layer of Vaseline just inside the entrance to your nostrils can help trap larger allergen particles, preventing them from going farther up your nose and causing more irritation. (Maybe that's where the phrase "getting right up my nose" came from?)

Anti-histamines – Allergens can cause us to produce histamines, which can in turn cause the symptoms of an allergic reaction. Anti-histamines counteract these, calm things down and help the immune system. However, histamines get to work long before you start to experience the symptoms of an allergic reaction. So to be most effective, it is important to take any anti-histamine well before you come into

contact with the allergen (two to five hours if possible) or just take them on a regular basis to be constantly covered. Some great natural anti-histamines include green or chamomile tea, and honey made by bees in your local area.

Foods that aggravate allergies – According to traditional Chinese medicine, there are certain foods that can exacerbate allergies. These include dairy (for their tendency to increase mucus production, so not good for any kind of asthma sufferer either) and sugar (which has a hugely negative impact on the immune system). Other specific foods that can weaken resistance to allergies include corn, peanuts, shellfish, wheat and the nightshade vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. I'm not saying these are bad for you; just maybe keep an eye on how much of these you eat when you're experiencing an allergic reaction. However, too much Omega-6 fatty acid rich food can be very inflammatory. Foods high in Omega-6 include corn, sunflower oils, processed foods such as salad dressings and fast food. Saturated and trans fats and partially hydrogenated oil can also trigger the release of inflammatory chemicals. A monosaturated olive oil would be a much less inflammatory choice of oil as your primary source of fat.

Foods that fight allergies – Spices such as turmeric and ginger have anti-inflammatory properties. Omega-3 fatty acid rich food such as salmon, cod and haddock (flax seed or a good supplement if you're vegetarian) also provide natural anti-inflammatory protection.

Holistic treatments – There are a plethora of holistic therapies that can help with allergies and it's well worth calling some of your local therapists and asking them if their form of therapy is effective for helping with your kind of allergy.

(You *nose* it makes sense!)

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.