



Preparing for the Allergy Season: Natural & Herbal Support

By Maria Noël Groves,
Co-op Wellness Educator & Registered
Clinical Herbalist

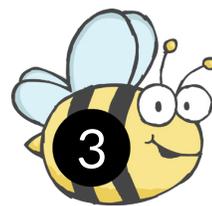


Pollen season is just around the corner, and now is the prime time to start preparing for it. If you traditionally suffer from seasonal allergies, take comfort in knowing that there are many ways to prep your immune system to potentially reduce or eliminate your symptoms this year.

Live a little dirty: Allergies are an over-reactive immune response, and several studies suggest that this is due to the fact that we are a bit too germ-phobic, which weakens the immune system and its signaling while also potentially harming our microbiome. So, wash your hands with plain soap and water, put away that hand sanitizer, embrace a little dirt, take your daily probiotics, eat plenty of vegetables, and don't take antibiotics unless you really need them. Specifically for allergies, two things of particular value include eating fermented foods like kimchi and live kraut daily and taking or eating medicinal and culinary mushrooms (either as a supplement, simmered in broth or tea, or cooked –

raw is not beneficial and occasionally harmful). Complex starches in mushrooms offer a positive challenge for the immune system and can help regulate the inflammation associated with allergies. Reishi, chaga, and cordyceps mushrooms have particular affinities for lung health and can be taken daily, but all edible/safe mushrooms have benefit. Many people swear by taking a spoonful of wild local honey daily, too.

Sleuth Out and Avoid Food Allergens & Sensitivities. This can be miraculous for some people. People with allergy issues (not just hay fever but also eczema, asthma, etc.) often have food sensitivities that can increase the severity of environmental allergies when you're eating a lot of those foods. Consider eliminating gluten/wheat and dairy for a month and then reintroducing them to see if this makes a difference. Those are common food sensitivities, but other potential culprits include corn, soy, and foods that encourage high histamine levels (red wine, chocolate, shellfish, aged meats... and even fermented foods in a few unlucky people). Taking measures to



heal the gut can also help, but that's a big topic of its own!

Helpful Supplements. Quercetin is my main go-to supplement for people with seasonal allergies. Vitamin C, NAC, and bromelain are also useful and often sold in combination with quercetin. They are best taken per the label directions beginning two to four weeks before your usual allergy season and throughout the season.

Helpful Herbs. I've been amazed at how useful herbs can be to prevent or reduce the severity of allergies when taken in advance, and some even help on the spot. I love to use nettle and goldenrod tinctures to reduce histamine, berberine-rich herbs to dry things up, mullein to lessen respiratory irritation, and horehound to thin and help expel mucus and post nasal drip. Learn more about my favorite allergy herbs in [this guest post on LearningHerbs](#) or attend my free Co-op class on the topic on April 12 in Concord.

The Usual Good Health Stuff. Getting a good night's sleep, reducing stress, eating healthy foods (and avoiding too much sugar, alcohol, and junk food), and exercising regularly are, as always, also worthwhile to keep your immune system happy and inflammation down. Also do what you can to keep indoor air quality good. For example, ventilate and wear a mask when you're doing construction or spring cleaning. The crankier your body is, the more likely you are to get knocked on your butt by a lot of dust, some pollen, or animal dander.

Maria runs Wintergreen Botanicals Herbal Clinic & Education Center nestled in the pine forests of Bear Brook State Park where she sees clients, teaches classes, and writes nationally about herbal medicine. She is the author of the critically acclaimed *Body into Balance: An Herbal Guide to Holistic Self Care*. Learn more about these things and herbs in general at www.WintergreenBotanicals.com.



Want to learn more about preventing allergies this spring? Attend Maria's free lecture in Concord on April 12th!

**Natural Allergy Relief
with Maria Noël Groves**
Wednesday, April 12th, 2017
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
Concord Fire Department Training HQ
24 Horseshoe Pond Lane, Concord NH

**Click here
to register!**