



Mark A. Stengler, NMD

NO MORE AHH-CHOO! HELP FOR SEASONAL ALLERGIES

Tis the season of pollen, which means that trees, grasses and weeds are busy releasing tiny grains of reproductive cells into the air. Just one plant can send out millions of powdery grains daily. *Result:* When these grains land in the noses or eyes or on the skin of people who are sensitive to pollen, they can set off an allergic reaction. The symptoms of *allergic rhinitis*, otherwise known as hay fever, include sneezing...coughing...itchy, watery eyes... and a runny or congested nose. Ragweed pollen is one of the most common airborne allergens now. Others include sagebrush, redroot pigweed and tumbleweed.

Exciting news: Since I last wrote about treating hay fever with natural remedies in *Bottom Line Natural Healing* in May 2006, there are several new and effective treatments to tell you about.

SUBLINGUAL IMMUNOTHERAPY

In Europe and South America, the use of sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) is a popular allergy treatment. The therapy involves placing tablets containing small amounts of allergen extract under the tongue (sublingual) to dissolve. This technique works similarly to allergy shots, in which small amounts of purified extract of the allergen are injected. After a series of treatments, patients build up tolerance to the substance in a process called *desensitization*, making them much less reactive to

the allergen. SLIT is easier on patients—it is less painful than shots and less time-consuming because the tablets can be taken at home. While SLIT has started to get attention among conventional medical doctors and allergists in this country, the FDA has yet to approve it, pending further investigation about long-term efficacy and dosing.

Although I don't prescribe it, I find SLIT interesting because it makes use of techniques that holistic physicians have been using for years to treat allergies. The premise behind both allergy shots and SLIT is similar to that of homeopathy, which treats allergies by desensitizing the immune system to the offending allergen—in this case, pollen. The main difference between SLIT and homeopathy is the extract used to desensitize the patient. In homeopathy, the extract is much more diluted than that used in SLIT. The more diluted a homeopathic remedy, the stronger the effect.

Homeopathy can really help patients. One notable 2005 study found that those with moderate-to-severe seasonal allergies had a 38% reduction in symptoms after taking homeopathic preparations compared with those taking a placebo. There are two homeopathic remedies that I recommend for hay fever. *Allium cepa*, which comes from onion, helps symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose and watery eyes. When hay fever mainly affects the eyes, I

prescribe *euphrasia*, made from the eyebright plant.

ISOPATHY

I use *isopathy*, a type of homeopathic treatment that also involves desensitization. Isopathy is based on the same premise as homeopathy—that “like cures like.” Homeopathy uses substances that produce symptoms *similar* to the offending substance, and isopathy uses the *same* substance to which a person is sensitive.

In isopathic treatment, patients are given a *very small amount of the actual substance* to which they are allergic in very diluted form. Isopathic treatment is given in the form of drops or pellets in the mouth or under the tongue. I generally recommend that patients take the oral drops three times daily in various low-potency strengths.

My patients who use isopathic treatment begin to notice improvement in allergy symptoms one week to one month after starting treatment. Susan, age 40, was one of my patients who had been troubled by tree and grass pollen for several years. In the San Diego area where she lives and I practice, pollen is present year-round. An allergist had given her conventional allergy medication along with allergy shots, but both were of only mild benefit. When she came to see me, she was having a very bad allergic reaction. Her sinuses were congested, and she was suffering from headaches, an incessant cough and irritated eyes.

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I started her on isopathic treatment—10 drops, three times daily, of a diluted extract of actual grass and tree pollen. Within a month, she felt much better. After five months, Susan no longer required the drops on a regular basis. Now, if a mild return of symptoms occurs, she takes the drops for a few days and her symptoms disappear.

Isopathy generally has no side effects and is safe for everyone, including pregnant and lactating women as well as children. Very occasionally, some patients respond to isopathy with their allergy symptoms slightly aggravated. When this happens, I reduce the frequency and/or strength of treatment.

I also use isopathy to treat other environmental allergies using extracts made of dust and dust mites. For those with animal allergies, I use an extract from animal dander. Isopathy also works well for people sensitive to chemicals and odors

from substances such as perfumes and cleaning agents. Patients with multiple allergies can be treated with drops that are a mixture of several allergy substances.

People with year-round allergies can start isopathic therapy at any time. For those with seasonal allergies, it's best to begin treatment several weeks before your allergy reaction typically sets in.

Remedies for several common allergies are available from Newton (800-448-7256, www.newtonlabs.net). They are premixed according to the allergen they treat—for instance, pollen and weeds. The isopathic treatments I provide, on the other hand, are specially prepared, based on my understanding of each patient's sensitivities. Insurance does not cover homeopathic or isopathic treatments, but the remedies are not very expensive, about \$20 for a one-month supply.

GETTING TREATED

You're sneezing and sniffing, but what are you allergic to? Here is what you need to do...

Get tested. If you are unsure of the cause of your allergic reactions, ask a holistic doctor to administer sensitivity testing. This can be done with blood tests, skin scratch tests or other testing.

Determine what will work. When patients have symptoms of hay fever, I recommend a homeopathic remedy. But when they have a mixture of symptoms where it's harder to pick a specific homeopathic remedy, I use isopathic treatments. Sometimes, for people with ongoing allergy problems, I recommend both.

Reference: L.S. Kim, et al., "Treatment of Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis Using Homeopathic Preparations," *The Annals of Pharmacotherapy* (2005). ■ ■