

Natural Ways to Breathe Easy

These remedies can protect your family from spring allergies.

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PHOTOS **MARTY BALDWIN**

QUERCETIN

Found in tea, quercetin can prevent allergy symptoms.

SALINE SOLUTION

Neti pots use a dissolved mixture to ease your stuffy sinuses.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Your mother's cod liver oil is back in style.

ZINC

Keep zinc lozenges on hand during allergy season.

STINGING NETTLE

This flower sounds unfriendly but is a great ally in fighting allergies.

medicines for allergies are effective but some people find the drugs leave them either feeling tired or strung out. "We find that people are looking for alternatives and want to try more natural approaches first. Or they want to use a combination of conventional

and alternative therapies," says Dr. Randy Horwitz, a board-certified allergist and medical director of the program in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona. Here's a look at the best natural remedies. Remember that herbs can have side effects and some shouldn't be taken during pregnancy. Consult your doctor.

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healthy you

FAMILY HEALTH

LEMON BALM

Essential oils, such as lemon balm, open up the sinus passages and even add a refreshing smell to your home.



1. QUERCETIN Quercetin is a natural antihistamine found in many fruits and vegetables, and in green tea. You can take quercetin capsules as you would any antihistamine—as you need them—but they work best if you take them preventively. If you usually begin experiencing symptoms in May, for example, start taking them in April. Continue throughout the season. Dose: 600 mg twice a day.

2. STINGING NETTLE “It’s one of the best natural remedies for allergic rhinitis,” says Horwitz. Take it as you need it or preventively a few weeks before allergy season begins and throughout the season. Dose: 300 mg of the capsules, made from the freeze-dried leaf extract, two to four times a day.

3. ESSENTIAL OILS Suzy Cohen, a pharmacist and author of *The 24-Hour Pharmacist*, recommends a steam inhalation of essential oil of lemon balm. Boil some water, add five to 10 drops of the essential oil, and transfer to a sturdy bowl. Carefully lean over it with a towel over your head and inhale.

4. OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS Fish oils, such as cod liver oil, contain omega-3 fatty acids, which can protect you from hay fever, sinus infections, and

asthma. One good brand is Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega, says Cohen. Dose: 1,000 mg once daily with a meal.

5. ZINC Zinc bolsters immune function. “If you’re able to stabilize your immune system, you’re less likely to react to allergens,” says Cohen. Buy zinc in lozenges or supplements. Dose: 10 to 15 mg once daily with a meal.

6. NOSE CLEANSING The use of a neti pot (which looks similar to a small tea pot) involves dissolving saline solution into water in the pot, then pouring the contents into your nose. It sounds uncomfortable but users get immense relief from the practice. “Once you’re willing to give it a try it makes all the difference in the world,” says Dr. Diane G. Heatley, associate professor of otolaryngology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Neti pots, complete with cleansing solution, are available at most drugstores and mass merchandisers. Good brands to try include SinuCleanse and NeilMed.

A SHOT IN THE ARM

Allergy shots, also called immunotherapy, can be a great help to those who have allergies and for whom medication or natural remedies aren’t working well. “Allergy shots can help desensitize you so you react more like a non-allergic person,” says Dr. Marjorie L. Slankard, allergy clinic director at Columbia-New York Presbyterian Medical Center. “Eighty percent of the time shots will lower medication needs and symptoms.” Allergy shots contain tiny amounts of the substances that you are allergic to and can increase your tolerance to them, similar to a vaccine. Allergy shots need to be given weekly for several months up to a year. After a year, you can go to a maintenance dose of once monthly for 3 years, or even longer if needed.

The impact of allergies

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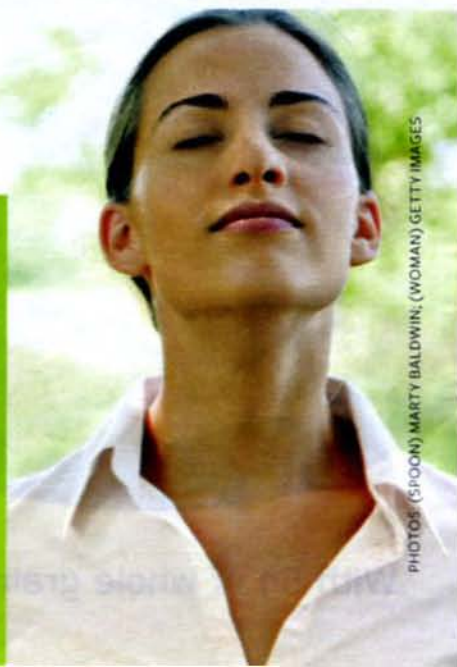
In billions, the cost associated with allergies.

75

Percentage of people with hay fever for whom ragweed is the main culprit.

40

The number, in millions, of Americans who suffer from seasonal allergies.



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