

Natural allergy relief

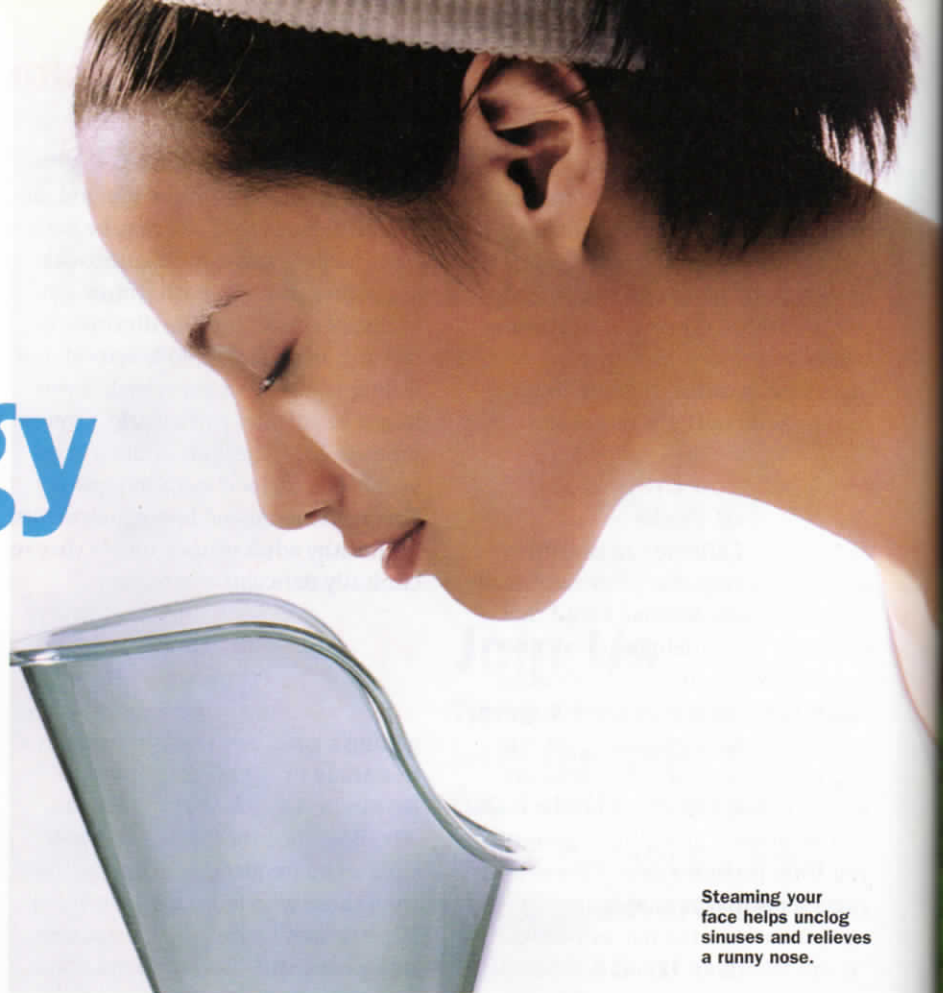
**13 WAYS TO ALLEVIATE
SNIFFLING, SNEEZING
AND HEADACHES THIS
SEASON.** by Rachel Rabkin

It happens to an estimated 40 to 50 million Americans every year: the stuffy head, watery eyes, runny nose and sneezing that signal seasonal allergies. The good news is that there are numerous mind, body, spirit remedies that can help you feel better. "Studies show that natural approaches are effective in improving allergy symptoms," says Robert Anderson, M.D., immediate past president of the American Board of Holistic Medicine. "The best part is that you can avoid the unwanted side effects of traditional medication such as drowsiness," he says. We asked top alternative-medicine experts for strategies to deal with this allergy season drug-free.

Diet

Pick up some produce

"About 20 percent of our immune cells are in the intestines, so diet plays a big role in immune function," says Carolyn Dean, M.D., a naturopathic physician in City Island, New York. Fruits and vegetables with the deepest hues, such as berries, spinach and red grapes, are highest in antioxidants, which help prevent the free-radical damage to cells that weakens



Steaming your face helps unclog sinuses and relieves a runny nose.

immunity. Vitamins C and E and beta-carotene (also found in brightly colored produce) have anti-inflammatory properties that may help decrease the swelling in the airways that causes congestion, says Mary L. Hardy, M.D., director of Integrative Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Quercetin, a plant compound found in apples and grapes, also inhibits inflammation in nasal passages.

Avoid dairy, sugar, wheat and food additives

These are known to produce excess mucus, which causes congestion and nasal irritation, according to Dr. Hardy. Cutting back will help make you less sensitive to pollens and other irritants.

Eat spicy foods

They can increase blood flow, which brings oxygen to the nasal passages and helps thin and eliminate mucus, says Dr. Hardy.

Drink water

Fluids help clear airways by hydrating mucous membranes: The wetter the membrane, the thinner the mucus and the more easily it can drain.

Choose foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids.

Found in fish, almonds and flax seeds, omega-3's may help lessen respiratory symptoms by reducing inflammation, according to a study from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Try herbs

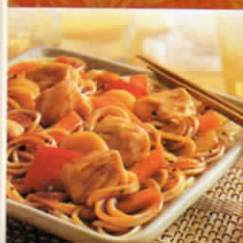
Be sure to check product labels for dosages, and always talk to your doctor about possible interactions with other drugs before taking anything.

- **Stinging nettle** is a natural anti-histamine that relieves irritation in the nasal passages, according to Dr. Anderson.
- **Sodium selenite** (a form of the antioxidant selenium) helps boost the immune system and neutralize free radicals, which can spur allergy attacks, says Dr. Anderson.
- **Aloe**, when taken in supplement form or in a saline-based nasal spray, can also help heal irritated mucous membranes.
- **Fenugreek** eases congestion by thinning mucus, says Dr. Hardy.

New

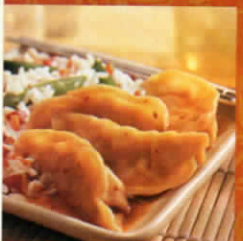


Chicken with Almonds
CHICKEN TENDERLOINS SERVED WITH A MEDLEY OF RICE, GREEN BEANS, YELLOW CARROTS AND BROCCOLI.



Teriyaki Stir Fry
ROASTED WHITE MEAT CHICKEN IN A TERIYAKI GLAZE WITH VEGETABLES AND PASTA.

Orange Beef
WITH PASTA, BOK CHOY, CARROTS AND WATER CHESTNUTS.



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Body

Work out for 30 minutes daily

When your body is exposed to an allergen (mold, animal dander, pollen, dust mites), it releases histamine, a substance that causes inflammation and irritation in the airways, nasal passages and eyes. Moderate aerobic exercise strengthens your immune system, making it less sensitive to allergens. Exercise also helps organs affected by allergies—such as the nasal passages, lungs and sinuses—function optimally by improving blood flow.

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During allergy season, try to work out indoors so your lungs aren't exposed to pollens and pollution.

Take yoga

Breathing exercises and simple yoga postures that relax the chest muscles and open airways such as the cobra, camel stretch (a backward bend) and fish pose can help the lungs take in more oxygen, explains Vasanthi Bhat, founder of the Vasantha Yoga in San Jose, California. To find out which breathing exercises and poses are best for relieving your symptoms, talk to a yoga instructor or consult a book like *The Power of Conscious Breathing in Hatha Yoga*, by Vasanthi Bhat, or check out her video *Pranayama (Yogic Breathing)*, available at vasanthayoga.com.

Get a massage

"Cranial massage can help open up nasal passages by promoting drainage," says Dr. Anderson. Several studies also show that massage therapy can decrease physical and mental stress. "Lower stress levels enable your immune system to function better and reduce the production of histamine," says Dr. Anderson.

Steam your face

This thins mucous secretions, which helps unclog your sinuses and alleviate a runny nose, says Dr. Hardy. Boil several cups of water and pour it into a large, wide-mouthed bowl. Place the bowl on a flat surface and hold your

head over it for about 15 minutes.

Keep the steam concentrated by placing a towel over your head and the bowl. Or, you can buy a facial steamer at the drugstore that has a plastic funnel-shaped attachment to direct steam. Steamers usually cost around \$25. Taking a long, hot shower or applying hot compresses to your face also helps relieve sinus pressure.

Drain your sinuses

To facilitate drainage once you've steamed, try the following postures: For the frontal sinuses (above the

eyes), sit upright for several minutes.

For the ethmoid sinuses (between the eyes and nose), lie down on your back for several minutes. To clear the maxillary sinuses (below the eyes), lie on the side opposite the sinus you want to drain: For the right one, lie on your left side for several minutes.

Try acupressure

It can help reduce sinus pressure, says Dr. Dean. Press the following points with your forefinger and thumb several times a day for 10 seconds each: the bridge of your nose (on either or both sides); the spots where your eyebrows start; the points on your face next to where your nostrils flare out.

Mind

Practice visualization

"Imagining that your nasal passages are clear tricks your body into acting that way because your nervous system responds equally to imagined and real perceptions," says Dr. Anderson. For best results, do this exercise when you're relaxed, for example after meditating or doing breathing exercises. First picture yourself in a scene that would normally cause your allergies to flare up—for example, on a farm surrounded by grass or near a cat. Then imagine yourself walking through the farm or petting the cat, breathing fully and deeply through your nose without restriction or chest tightness. ■