

# Allergy Season: A Call to Action

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With the beginning of spring comes longer days, a little sunshine, warmer temperatures, flowers and trees blooming. My personal favorite is all of the cherry blossoms raining down like a snow storm of flower petals. Yet for some of us it also brings a blooming of runny noses, watery eyes and sneezing.....yes, allergy season is here and for those who are affected, it can put quite a damper on enjoying our lovely Oregon outdoors and much of anything else.

Once individuals discover that their fatigue, constant post-nasal drip and sinus congestion is due to allergies and not a cold that just won't go away, they will often turn to a multitude of allergy medications available either over the counter or by prescription. Some of the most common medications are anti-histamines, decongestants, and steroids. These are symptom-relievers which means they don't treat the cause of the allergies. Some may experience complete relief when taking one or more of these medications but others will experience little to no relief with a plethora of possible side effects including drowsiness, elevated blood pressure, insomnia, and weight gain. Some medications may also cause rebound congestion making you think you need more medication to control symptoms

when in reality the drug is the culprit. One of the first tenets in naturopathic medicine is to discover and treat the cause. So when considering how to deal with allergies, asking the question "why?" is an important start to ultimately feeling better. Allergies occur when our bodies mistake something that should normally be considered harmless as something threatening. We then produce an immune response against the perceived invader. The level of response can vary in severity from life threatening anaphylaxis to developing asthma to classic runny nose and sneezing.

There are those that can thank their genetics for their runny nose as the pollen counts rise, for others allergies are explained by the number of insults their body has already had to deal with. An insult is anything that has the potential of causing inflammation or cellular damage. An example is when there is a break down in the body's normal protective barrier in the gastrointestinal tract, a place where a tremendous portion of the immune system resides. This allows food particles that normally wouldn't trigger reactions to get through the defenses. Unfortunately in today's environment we are faced with a constant barrage of things that may cause a "breach in the fortress". Seasonal allergies are considered a minor annoyance but when considering the recent research

pointing to chronic inflammation as the root of many much more serious diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, it needs to be considered that allergies may be a stepping stone to something much worse.

I challenge all of the allergy sufferers out there to start thinking of your runny noses not as something to simply be covered up but as a call to action to make improvements in your overall health. This is the fundamental path to eliminating your allergy symptoms. A natural treatment approach that is effective and addresses the causes will lead to health and wellness in all aspects of life. Examples are modification of diet & personal environment, nutritional & herbal therapies, hydrotherapy (such as a neti pot to rinse sinuses), acupuncture and stress management techniques. The naturopathic physicians at True Health Medicine are experts at helping you minimize your allergy symptoms while maximizing your health potential.



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