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The Maharishi Ayurveda Approach to Allergies with Nancy Lonsdorf M.D.

By Nancy Lonsdorf M.D.

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Allergies: The Ayurvedic Answer

In a healthy body, the allergic response serves to protect against invasion by harmful agents. Secretions and inflammation help our immune cells get into the affected tissue, dilute the toxic agent and help wash it away. "Allergies" become a health problem when an excessive and unwanted allergic response occurs to particles that are part of our normal environment and are not actually dangerous to the body.

Some individuals are born with allergies, and have a genetic susceptibility to them. However, most allergies are acquired after birth. While inborn allergies can often be helped by the measures discussed in this article, acquired allergies are generally more responsive to such behavioral approaches, and are the main focus of this article.

The Main Cause of Allergies

Although pollen, dust, dander, trees and other allergens are the trigger for allergies in susceptible people, they are not the underlying cause. Many people are exposed to these substances every day without developing allergic reactions. Rather, it is the inner condition of the body that determines whether an allergic response results from exposure to an allergen.

According to Maharishi Ayurveda, allergies result when the body has accumulated excess wastes, toxins and impurities. How does this happen? According to Ayurvedic theory, improperly digested foods (called ama), and impurities, such as chemical additives, are absorbed into the body, travel through the circulation and lodge in the respiratory tissues, skin and other tissues prone to allergy. These accumulated wastes and toxins block the channels, trapping the toxins inside the tissues, and activating the immune system. When additional allergens such as pollen or dust arrive on the scene, the already irritated immune system goes into "high gear," creating the symptoms of an allergy attack.

Symptoms will vary depending on the tissue that has accumulated the toxic waste (ama visha.). If the tissue involved is the digestive tract, diarrhea can result. If in the skin, a rash or hives may occur. And if the respiratory tract is involved, sneezing, inflammation and mucous drainage will occur.

Since the source of allergies lies with our diet and digestion, adopting a proper diet and improving digestion are "job one" in the fight against allergies. Next, it is valuable to use internal cleansing regimens to reduce the clogging and accumulated impurities.

Recommended Diet for Allergies

The main dietary and eating guidelines for allergies are as follows.

1. Eat the largest meal of the day at lunch, between 12:00 and 1:00 PM, when your digestion is

strongest. The sun—the heat element in nature—enlivens agni, the fire of digestion and metabolism, making our digestion strongest at the height of the day. Ayurveda recommends eating the largest meal when you are most capable of digesting it.

2. Avoid eating heavy meals in the evening. The single biggest contribution to toxins and clogging in the body comes from eating heavy evening meals, particularly after 7 PM. Since digestion is much weaker in the evening, it is vital to eat lighter, more easily digested meals at that time. Eat a warm, freshly cooked vegetarian evening meal without fried foods, desserts, cheese, yogurt or other curdled products, since these are heavy for digestion and cause more blockage, congestion and mucous.

3. Eat warm food. Warm food is much easier to digest than cold food. Ayurveda recommends we eat fresh warm food, freshly prepared. Avoid micro-waving, which has been shown to destroy over 90% of the protective antioxidants in the food. Also, avoid cold drinks, ice cream, frozen yogurt and other cold foods.

4. Avoid leftovers. Once food has been heated and then gets put back in the refrigerator it becomes hard to digest and very clogging in nature.

5. Avoid excessively hot spices, sour and acidic foods. These foods are irritating to the body and promote inflammation, according to Ayurveda. Many people experience their allergies become worse when they eat foods with chilis, tomato sauces, hard or aged cheeses, refined sugar and sweets, and acidic foods. Bell pepper, eggplant and potato should also be avoided due to their channel-clogging effects.

6. Do include detoxifying spices in your daily diet. Turmeric in particular has anti-allergy, immune-balancing effects. Coriander helps to detoxify on a cellular level; fennel cools and balances; ginger helps the digestion and dissolves ama, and black pepper clears the channels and increases bioavailability of nutrients. Make a spice mixture of 6 parts fennel, cumin and coriander, 4 parts turmeric and 1 part each of ginger and black pepper. Freshly grind the spices, sauté them in a pan without oil until lightly browned, and put in a small airtight container. Carry them with you and sprinkle _ to 1 tsp. on your food at each meal, and cook with them when at home.

7. Do sip boiled warm or hot water about every half hour during the day around the change of seasons, to help your body purify and to support good digestion.

Behavioral Approaches to Reducing Allergies

Diet is not the only consideration in allergies. Ayurvedic theory also recommends the following behavioral changes to help tone down the allergic response.

1. Go to bed by 10:00 P.M. Between 10 PM and 2 AM, the body performs a natural cycle of internal cleansing. If we stay up after 10 PM, we interfere with this metabolic "house cleaning" and toxins and impurities begin to accumulate. Worse yet, the metabolic activity of cleansing tends to trigger hunger, and we may be tempted to indulge in the proverbial "midnight snack." Unfortunately, eating after 10 PM further compromises the cleansing process and leads to even more waste accumulation, and more allergy tendency. On the other hand, going to bed by 10 PM improves the overall rejuvenative quality of sleep. You will find that your early bedtime habit helps not only your allergies, but your energy and complexion as well!

2. Cleanse the body before the allergy season. The traditional Ayurvedic answer to allergies includes purifying the body of ama and toxins before allergy season begins to prevent symptoms from arising at all. This internal cleansing may be done at home or, more thoroughly, through in-residence cleansing treatments called panchakarma or Maharishi Rejuvenation Therapy.

3. Have a regular routine of life. Eating, sleeping, working and exercising at about the same time each day is very balancing and stabilizing to the immune system and to the body as a whole. Allergies tend to be aggravated when routine of life is hectic and scattered.

4. Practice Yoga asanas and meditation. Yogas asanas and meditation are very balancing to all aspects of mind and body and have been used by many people to reduce allergy symptoms. For meditation, I suggest the TM technique because of its ease of practice and scientific verification.

Summary

The best approach to allergies is to focus on good eating habits, practice stress reduction and do natural cleansing before the allergy season.

Note: This article is for educational purposes only and is not meant to diagnose or treat disease. Please consult your physician regarding any symptoms you have or before you make changes in lifestyle and diet.

Statements in this article have not been evaluated by the FDA and are not intended for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of disease.

Nancy Lonsdorf M.D. received her M.D. from Johns Hopkins and did her postgraduate training at Stanford. She has studied Ayurveda with some of the world's most renowned Ayurvedic physicians in India, Europe and the U.S. Dr. Lonsdorf has 18 years of clinical experience with Ayurveda and is

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Dr. Lonsdorf has authored two books on Ayurveda and women's health:

1. A Woman's Best Medicine (Penguin/Putnam 1995 ; ISBN 0-87477-785-2) describing the Ayurvedic approach to the major issues in women's health
2. The Ageless Woman: Health and Beauty after Forty with Maharishi Ayurveda (MCD Century Publications 2004 ISBN#: 0-9721233-5-0) on anti-aging recommendations and longevity for women.

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Ayurveda Can Help Stop Hair Loss

By Richard Mitchell

Most hair loss sufferers seek solutions from Western medicine or turn to remedies derived from local traditions. Some experts however argue that the ayurvedic system of medicine has much to offer in dealing with hair loss conditions.

Ayurveda is the traditional system of medicine practiced in India and Sri Lanka. It is a complete approach to health care designed to promote a way of life rather than an occasional treatment. As a holistic system of medicine ayurveda focuses on our uniqueness and takes into account our mental attitude, lifestyle and spirit which should not be treated in isolation from each other.

According to ayurveda, the following principles are beneficial to healthy and plentiful hair: The scalp must be kept cool, so protection from sun and washing in cold or lukewarm water are paramount. Sound nutrition is key, so a hair-friendly diet should emphasize proteins, iron, zinc, sulfur, Vitamin C, Vitamin B-Complex and essential fatty acids. Use should be made of hair analysis to ascertain toxicity levels and nutritional deficiencies. Oils, for example sesame and coconut, should be applied to the scalp to nourish, lubricate and strengthen the roots. This will also improve circulation to the head.

You can find out more about alternative hair loss treatments by visiting the site listed below.

Richard Mitchell is the creator of the

website that provides information

and guidance to those suffering from premature hair loss.

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