

Acupuncture and Seasonal Allergies

For many people spring and summer are seasonal for allergies. Allergies, or allergic rhinitis, are due to an over-reactivity of the immune system to certain allergens. During spring and summer, allergies are generally induced by wind-borne tree, grass or weed pollen, and can cause such symptoms as: sneezing; nasal congestion; runny nose; watery, itchy, or red eyes; headaches; fatigue; and sometimes coughing and wheezing. When allergens and antibodies react in individuals with allergic rhinitis, their nasal mucosa becomes swollen and may obstruct drainage from the sinuses causing sinusitis in many people. Thus, sinus infections are a frequent complication and consequence of allergic rhinitis. While spring and summer are the seasons of the year that bring us outdoors, many people are unable to enjoy these warmer months due to uncomfortable symptoms.

Acupuncture can help bring relief of symptoms, correct imbalances of the immune system, prevent the occurrence of infection, and allow healing of tissues of the sinuses. From Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), allergic rhinitis is due to a deficiency of the Lung and Kidney's Defensive-Qi systems, combined with retention of chronic "Wind" in the nose. Allergic rhinitis often starts in early childhood, with a constitutional weakness, but it may also start later in life, with a progressive decline of Kidney-Qi. Lung and Kidney Qi Deficiency is the root of the problem, therefore, with herbal medicine and acupuncture we strengthen and nourish these organs. The manifestation of the disease is Wind invading the Lung channel in the nose. This accounts for the acute attacks. With herbs and acupuncture, we clear the Wind, reduce congestion, and open

the nasal passages. It is necessary to treat both the root and the manifestation in order to produce lasting results. Western medicine views seasonal allergies as a form of immediate hypersensitivity reaction which occurs when anti-bodies produced by lymphocytes interact with airborne particles such as pollen. Western medicine describes the locations of lymphocytes in addition to begin in the blood stream as also in Peyer's patches in the gastrointestinal tract, spleen, lymph nodes, and bone marrow. I find it effective to treat seasonal allergies with Acupuncture. There is often a quick response, many patients get some relief during the first visit. Patients can also determine the effectiveness of acupuncture treatment by tracking the number of sneezing per day and the number of itching episodes around their eyes. After an initial series of treatments patients come in for further treatments on an as needed basis. Some patients come back in once or twice a year for a booster while others may come more often. In general, patients do better if they avoid sugar and milk in their diets. They have better and longer lasting responses. I have seen many patients who failed medication and allergy shots respond to acupuncture and they become better after acupuncture. Patients continue with whatever standard treatments they are currently undergoing while getting acupuncture treatments. Most patients end up significantly reducing or eliminating their dependence on allergy medications. The Western treatment of allergic rhinitis relies mostly on the use of antihistamine agents. Unfortunately, antihistamines only treat the manifestations of the disease and not the root. In addition, they cause side effects such as dizziness, fatigue, insomnia, nervousness, dryness and gastrointestinal disturbance. TCM offers allergy sufferers a way to

strengthen their bodies and significantly reduce their symptoms, without unpleasant side effects. You do not have to spend another season living with allergies.