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**Allergy symptoms keeping you down – read on for some tips**

Environmental allergies can be uncomfortable and very problematic for some people, even to the point of affecting one's sleep. If you suffer from allergic symptoms you may recognize the terms "hayfever" and "rhinitis". Hayfever has become a catchall term used to describe seasonal allergic rhinitis. Allergic rhinitis is an allergic reaction of the nasal passageways and airways to particles carried in the air, such as pollens, dust, pollutants, fragrances.



A runny nose is not the only symptom experienced by allergy sufferers; itchy nose and eyes, red and watering eyes, sneezing, and congestion are also quite common. Some asthmatics find that their asthma is exacerbated during the allergy season. These patients are suffering from what is known as "atopic" asthma, meaning *allergic asthma*, where allergens trigger the release of substances within the body which cause inflammation in the respiratory tract, leading to shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing and thickened mucus.

**The Causes of Rhinitis**

Causes of allergic rhinitis can vary. Some people have a flare-up of rhinitis in the spring when the trees are pollinating. Others experience symptoms throughout the summer - often a reaction to summer grass and weed pollens. On the other hand, some people don't have symptoms until the late summer, which usually indicates a ragweed pollen allergy. Year-round allergic symptoms may be caused by moulds and dust, or may even be more complex involving food sensitivities.

Just a reminder that our office is a scent-free zone. Talk to your employer about doing the same for your work environment.

**Allergic Threshold**

Naturopathic doctors believe that one of the keys to allergies is *total allergenic load*. When a person is exposed to only one allergen, they may not experience any symptoms. However, when this person is exposed to many allergens, their system becomes overwhelmed, thus allergic symptoms present. By reducing the total allergenic load, you may be able to reduce and even prevent the allergic process. How do we decrease allergenic load?

- Reduce exposure to airborne allergens
- Reduce food allergen intake

**Creating an Allergy-free Room in your House**

One way of reducing exposure to airborne allergens is making one spot in your home an allergy-free safe-haven. The bedroom is the most effective place to do this. Here are some suggestions:

- Dust mite covers for pillows and mattresses

- Remove carpeting and have hard surfaced floors
- Purchase a HEPA filter
- Remove indoor plants
- Prevent household pets access
- Clean room thoroughly & often with scent-free natural products
- Air the room frequently
- Use blinds, not curtains

**Clean Up Your Diet**

Eliminating or reducing the number of common allergenic foods in your diet can help to improve allergy symptoms as well as decreasing your total allergenic load. See the article "Infant Food Introduction" on reverse for a list of common food allergens you may need to avoid.

**Hydrotherapy for Allergies**

Steam Inhalations can help to open up the sinuses and lubricate the nasal passages. Fill a large bowl with hot water, lean face over the bowl into the steam with towel draped over head and neck. Take several long, slow inhalations.

Nasal Lavage can help to clear out mucus accumulated in the sinuses. Fill a bowl with warm water and dissolve a teaspoon of sea salt in it. Plug one nostril and inhale the water into the other nostril, allow it to drain into the sink, repeat several times per side.

*Ontario is now smoke-free. If "the patch" hasn't worked for you, but you'd like to quit, ask your ND about the smoking cessation program.*

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## Infant Food Introduction

To avoid food allergies and/or sensitivities later in life, it is important to follow a proper food introduction schedule.

As infants, our intestines are "leaky" to proteins and large molecules. This permeability is important during the first week of life when antibodies (proteins) are obtained from a nursing mother's colostrum. This provides newborns with immunity to all the illnesses mom is and has been exposed to. The intestines remain permeable for approximately the first 6 months; therefore, any foods, especially the protein rich ones, introduced during this time may become allergenic.

### Proper Food Choices

We all want to give our infants the very best. When considering what foods to introduce, avoid additives (sugar, salt, sweeteners, or fats) and give them organic, locally grown produce as much as possible. *Never* give honey to a child under 12 months because of the risk of botulism. Juice and water are also not recommended since you do not want to "dilute" their nutrient intake.

### Foods to Avoid

It is suggested that you avoid giving your infant the common allergens for up to 1 year of age:

cow's milk and dairy
soy and soymilk
wheat
oranges
corn
strawberries
eggs
peanuts
chocolate

## Food Introduction

- At 6 Months choose foods that are iron-rich, have adequate fibre, and are hypoallergenic, such as: carrots, butternut squash, yam, beets, broccoli, cauliflower, pears, apricots and blackberries.
- Sweet foods should be introduced at 7½ months to avoid nurturing a sweet-tooth: prunes, cherries, acorn squash, peaches and applesauce.
- At 9 months introduce foods high in zinc, which are good for the immune system: sweet potato, papaya, blueberries, brown rice, millet, apples, plums and blackstrap molasses (added to brown rice porridge)
- At 12 months continue to introduce foods high in zinc and fibre: banana, asparagus, avocado, quinoa, whole fat goat's milk, whole fat yogurt, organic egg yolk and kiwi.
- By 18 months introduce foods high in vitamins and calcium: beans/legumes, eggplant, lamb, chicken, fish and gluten containing grains (oats, rye, wheat, buckwheat, spelt, kamut).
- By 21 months foods high in protein should be introduced: egg, whole fat cow's milk, walnuts, corn, wheat, oranges, turkey, almond/cashew butter, and pineapple.
- Toddlers, ages 2-3 years, will enjoy eating finger foods, helping to prepare foods and set the table. Introduce the following foods at this point: sunflower seeds, lentils, natural peanut butter, soy, cottage cheese, duck and cheese (goat or cow).

*Be relaxed with food introduction, this should be an enjoyable and exciting time!*

## Allergy Symptoms

Introduce new foods one at a time, preferably for three to four days, while looking out for these symptoms:

- Rash around mouth or anus
- Dark circles around eyes
- Diarrhea or mucous in stool
- Redness of face or cheeks
- Runny nose/sneezing
- Skin reactions (hives/eczema)
- Hyperactivity or lethargy
- Frequent infections
- Change in personality

*Once a food has been introduced rotating this non-allergenic food every 4 days will minimize sensitization, which may occur when the same foods are eaten repeatedly.*

### Lemon Herb Quinoa

1 cup	quinoa
1½ Tb	olive oil
2 cups	water
¾ tsp	dried marjoram or oregano
½ tsp	dried thyme
¼ tsp	dried rosemary – crumbled
3 Tb	chopped parsley
2 Tb	fresh lemon juice
½ tsp	grated lemon rind
Pepper & salt to taste	

1. Place quinoa in a large bowl; fill with cold water. Drain into a strainer and repeat rinsing 4 more times.
  2. Over medium-high heat, heat oil in a 2-quart saucepan. Add rinsed quinoa and cook, stirring until the quinoa makes crackling and popping noises, about 3-5 minutes. Stir in water, herbs and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, simmer and cover for 15 minutes.
  3. Stir in parsley, lemon juice, salt, lemon rind and pepper. Simmer, covered for 5 more minutes. Fluff with a fork and Serve.
- Makes 4-6 servings.