

relieve your ALLERGIES

WHAT ARE ALLERGIES?

An allergy is when your body is hypersensitive and over reacts to a harmless environmental substance. It is a disorder of the immune system and is characterised by allergic reactions where your body activates your immune system as if it were under attack resulting in an inflammatory and purging response. This is why allergic reactions lead to swelling, redness, itching, sneezing and watery eyes. Allergic reactions range from a mild annoyance to extreme and life threatening anaphylactic shock.

TYPES OF ALLERGENS

1. AIRBORNE

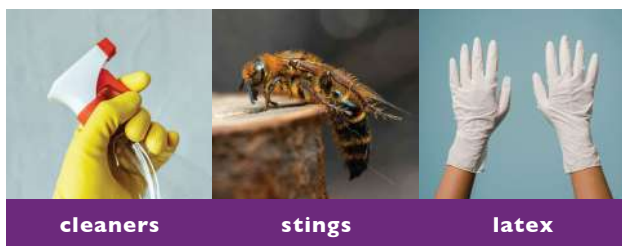
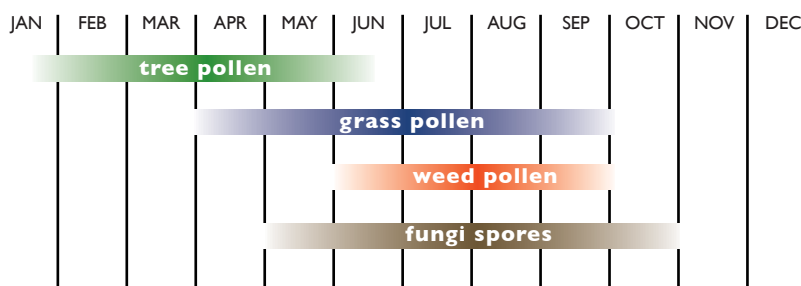
This is one of the most common forms of allergy. It is triggered by tiny particles suspended in the air. Its scientific name is allergic rhinitis. This includes seasonal rhinitis such as hayfever; tree and fungus allergies as well as perennial rhinitis such as pet and dust mite allergies. These allergies can be made worse by pollutants and irritants such as car fumes, smoke and strong perfumes. The symptoms usually include running nose and eyes, sneezing, swelling and itchy eyes.



ALLERGY & ASTHMA

Allergic rhinitis can also cause asthma. The exposure to an allergic trigger in the lungs can cause the airways to become narrower which leads to coughing, shortness of breath and tightness in the chest. Asthma is potentially fatal, so if you feel like your allergy is affecting your lungs you should get treatment quite urgently.

POLLEN & SPORES CALENDAR



2. CONTACT

If your skin comes into contact with an allergic trigger then it can cause a skin reaction like dermatitis. Common triggers are materials like latex, chemical cleaners, insect bites or stings. Symptoms include local redness, swelling, itchy hives and eczema.

3. FOOD

Allergies from eating or drinking a substance can range from mild reactions of discomfort, heartburn and itchy hives on the skin to life threatening anaphylactic shock. Food allergies can come out of nowhere and can sometimes go away. Common allergens include dairy, gluten, nuts, shellfish and certain fruits.



ALLERGY OR INTOLERANCE?

Allergies cause an immediate and measurable response in your immune system. A food intolerance can cause a wide range of responses (such as bloating, mucus, IBS etc) in your body and can occur up to 24 hours after eating. Food intolerances are much harder to uncover and usually involves some level of trial and error combined with food intolerance blood testing.

ALLERGY TESTS

Most people suffering from allergies know that they have them because the symptoms are very clear and can be linked to a very specific trigger. Sometimes it can be harder to figure out. There are 2 ways to test for allergies:

1. SKIN PRICK TEST

This involves drawing a grid on your skin and lightly pricking the surface along the grid. The doctor then places a drop of synthesised substance that mimics an allergen on each prick. The skin is left for 10 minutes and then the doctor checks for any inflammatory response by the body. The doctor can then tell which substances you may be allergic to. It's not a perfect test because sometimes you will react to a substance that doesn't cause you any problems but it is a pretty accurate test.



2. SPECIFIC IgE BLOOD TEST

There are testing kits that use a drop of your blood to see how your blood reacts to various allergens. This test is usually more expensive than the skin prick test and has a similar accuracy. It can also over give false positives where it diagnoses an allergen that causes the patient no reaction.

Both of these tests are useful but they should always be combined with your actual experiences to make a more accurate diagnosis.

CONVENTIONAL TREATMENTS

1. AVOIDANCE - Most doctors will first look at ways of avoiding triggering an allergy. Sometimes this is relatively simple like staying away of a particular food, although this can sometimes be more challenging than it seems especially in the case of nut allergies. For people suffering from airborne allergies like hayfever and dust allergies, complete avoidance is simply not possible. Pollen filters, regular washing of clothes and bedsheets, closing all windows and not venturing outdoors during the spring and summer days where pollen is at its peak - these are all common ways to try to prevent allergic reactions and they can help but they severely affect your quality of life.

2. DRUGS - Antihistamines are taken by the truckload every year by allergy sufferers. They suppress the immune response to control the allergy symptoms. They are a useful way of dealing with a reaction but they provide no real treatment of the underlying allergy. Antihistamines usually come in the form of pills but nasal sprays and eye drops can also be used. Antihistamines can cause drowsiness, confusion, constipation, blurred visions and headaches. They should not be taken by pregnant women.



3. IMMUNOTHERAPY - This is a method used for some patients with extreme allergic sensitivity. It is a way of almost vaccinating against the allergy by injecting controlled doses of the allergen into your blood. Your body will usually react to the allergen but after continuous injections your immune system starts to become desensitised. The doses of the injection are gradually increased until your body does not react to high amounts of the allergen. This treatment is successful in reducing allergies in around 80-90% of people. The problem is that the treatment is unpleasant (triggering allergic responses) and usually involves 2 injections a week for up to 6 months and then 2 injections a month for up to 5 years.

THE HAYFEVER INJECTION

Recently patients have been receiving Kenalog injections to relieve hayfever and other allergic rhinitis symptoms. These injections are steroids which block the body's inflammatory response to the allergen. They normally provide relief for about a month and most doctors would advise against having any more than 2 injections per year.

Injecting artificial steroids into the body severely disrupts your body's natural hormone balance. This can lead to temporary reliance on the steroids, an impaired immune system making you more susceptible to infections, and a long list of physical, psychological and emotional side effects. You should avoid such extreme treatments as much as possible.



DRUG FREE TREATMENTS

Wherever possible it is always better to seek out drug free treatments. Fortunately, allergies respond well to acupuncture and Chinese Medicine and can also be controlled by looking at any dietary reasons for allergies.



AcuMedic®

CHINESE MEDICAL TREATMENT



Chinese Medicine is very successful at treating disorders of the immune system. In essence, allergies demonstrate that your immune system is hypersensitive and out of balance. Chinese Medicine treatment is aimed at looking at your own particular causes of this imbalance and helping your body to regulate itself using herbs and acupuncture. In this way, Chinese Medicine does not treat the symptoms of the allergic reactions but addresses the cause of the allergy. You will also probably notice long term improvement in other complaints that you may have thought to be unrelated to your allergies such as bad skin, impatience, feeling of heaviness and irritability.

Studies have shown that the success rate for allergy treatment using Chinese Medicine is around 80-90%. If you are interested in receiving treatment for allergies then please call our clinic reception on 020 7388 6704.

ACUMEDIC HAYFEVER PROGRAM

The World Health Organisation strongly recommends acupuncture for hay fever (seasonal rhinitis). Clinical trials have shown this natural medicine to be more effective than antihistamine drugs.*

The AcuMedic Clinic offers a special acupuncture programme designed to treat your hay fever by gently strengthening the immune system and its ability to cope with the allergens that trigger the symptoms such as itchy and sore eyes and throat, sneezing, nasal inflammation and other related discomforts.

The Chinese Medical doctors at AcuMedic have decades of experience of successfully treating hay fever with acupuncture and will tailor the treatment to your individual health needs, including any other health issues you might be having at the moment.

For best results, you should start the treatment before the pollen season begins or as soon as you experience the symptoms.

All the acupuncture and Chinese herbal treatments at AcuMedic are compatible with Western medicine. Many of our hay fever patients have found the prescribed Chinese Medicine to be more helpful than Western medications.

For further information visit www.acumedic.com or call our clinic to book an appointment on 020 7388 6704 or email clinic@acumedic.com

* clinical trials:

Chari P et al. Acupuncture therapy in allergic rhinitis. American Journal of Acupuncture, 1988, 16(2):143-147.

Huang YQ. [Therapeutic effect of acupuncture treatment in 128 cases of hay fever.] Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 1990, 10(6):296-297 [in Chinese].

Jin R et al. [Clinical observation of 100 cases with allergic rhinitis treated by acupuncture.] Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 1989, 9(4):185-186 [in Chinese].

Liu DX. [Acupuncture at biqu in the treatment of allergic rhinitis.] Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 1995, 15(6):293 [in Chinese].

Yu JL et al. [Effect of acupuncture treatment in 230 cases of allergic rhinitis.] Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 1994, 14(5):241-242 [in Chinese].

Visit www.acumedic.com and go to our *COMMON CONDITIONS* page to see a list of conditions and the Chinese Medical viewpoint.

AcuMedic offers free health advice so feel free to come into one of our branches and ask for some free health advice.

NATURAL SUPPLEMENTS FOR ALLERGY RELIEF

CHRYSANTHEMUM TEA - This is a great cooling anti-inflammatory tea which is especially good for relieving red, itchy eyes and sinus congestion. Drink a few cups a day.



GREEN TEA - The catechins in green tea have been shown to fight allergic reactions in scientific studies. Drinking a few cups a day was shown to block the histamine and IgE receptor response to allergens.



LICORICE ROOT

Helps to regulate the adrenal gland and has anti-inflammatory properties to reduce your allergic reaction.



EUCALYPTUS

Inhaling eucalyptus helps to relieve congested airways. It also has antibacterial properties to cleanse the air of bacteria and dust mites.



WHAT CAUSES ALLERGIES?

Allergies and intolerances are some of the fastest growing conditions in the modern world. They are modern diseases, affecting developed countries much more than developing and third world areas. Every year there are around 5% more allergy sufferers.

HYGIENE HYPOTHESIS

Some scientists believe that our immune system has evolved to be reliant on some stimulation from bacteria and other pathogens, especially early in life. In developed countries we have been taught to keep all areas clean and hygienic using chemical cleaners to destroy pathogens and therefore as children we have had a much lower exposure to dirt and bacteria compared with previous generations. This has led to a hypersensitive immune system which reacts to harmless substances.



POLLUTION & DIET

Allergies are more prevalent in industrial areas which has led to the hypothesis that chemical pollution in the air and in our food can aggravate allergies. Refined sugars, chemicals, growth hormones and antibiotics in our food are also thought to be contributing factors.



PREGNANCY & GENETICS

Allergies are genetically predisposed. If your parents suffer from allergies then you will have a higher chance of developing allergies, although not necessarily to the same allergen. Other scientists believe that polluting the body with chemicals such as smoke and other synthesized drugs during pregnancy can lead to allergies in the child. Breast milk is also an important way of regulating a baby's immune system to reduce the chance of allergies.



It is clear that we do not know all of the answers regarding allergies but it is also fairly obvious that trying to live in a more natural and traditional way will help to alleviate and prevent allergies.