

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michiel Rorick

## All-Natural Relief for Allergic Rhinitis

*The sneezing, the sniffing, the coughing, the watery eyes ... allergic rhinitis (hay fever) can make life miserable. And with side effects ranging from drowsiness to high blood pressure and diabetes, allergy medication is often a solution worse than the condition itself. Dr. Rorick is concerned about the upswing in marketing and use of allergy medications and encourages patients to seek natural solutions, including chiropractic.*



### Nothing to Sneeze At

Allergies go beyond occasional bouts of the sniffles. Studies show that allergies significantly affect quality of life and interfere with daily activities, including work and school. And a new survey reveals that allergies also dramatically affect sufferers' moods and self-perceptions.

According to "Attitudes About Allergies" (a Harris Interactive phone survey conducted among 1,000 allergy sufferers, 1,000 consumers (both allergy sufferers and non-sufferers) and 300 physicians), 62 percent of allergy sufferers say their allergies influence their mood. Fifty-one percent feel annoyed, 48 percent feel irritable and 42 percent feel frustrated. Additionally, 22 percent say their allergies make them feel less attractive, and 19 percent feel self-conscious.

### What Is Allergic Rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis is an allergic reaction to airborne particles. This reaction primarily affects the nose and eyes.

There are two types of allergic rhinitis: seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever) and perennial allergic rhinitis, which occurs year-round.

Hay fever is triggered by outdoor allergens, and perennial allergic rhinitis by indoor allergens. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis resemble those of a

cold.

### What Causes Allergies?

In allergic rhinitis, the immune system overresponds to harmless substances — like pollen, mold and pet dander — and launches an assault. This attack is called an allergic reaction.

Risk factors for allergic rhinitis include a family history of allergy, having other allergies, such as food allergies or eczema, exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke, a poor diet, lack of exercise, fatigue and stress.

Researchers also speculate that an aggressive childhood vaccination schedule may prompt an autoimmune response, which might be associated with the rise in cases of allergic rhinitis.

### Keep Your Immune System in Top Form With Chiropractic

Preliminary research indicates that chiropractic strengthens immunity by influencing the nervous system. Researchers speculate that, because the spinal column houses the spinal cord (the main component of the nervous system), dysfunction of the spinal column may influence the nervous system. This, in turn, impairs immune function (*Circulation* 1992;86:203).

Since allergies are tied to a dysfunction in the immune system, the chiro-

practic office is a great place to start in the battle against allergies.

Doctors of chiropractic, like Dr. Rorick, theorize that a common condition known as *vertebral subluxation* may disturb the natural flow of nerve impulses. Vertebral subluxations occur when spinal movement is restricted or spinal bones (vertebrae) become misaligned. Dr. Rorick corrects this condition with safe and gentle maneuvers called *chiropractic adjustments*.

Dr. Rorick also advocates additional nondrug approaches for allergy sufferers to try in conjunction with chiropractic adjustments. These strategies include the following:

### Allergy Prevention

Reducing exposure to allergens is key to preventing symptoms. Complete avoidance of environmental allergens may be impossible, but you can minimize exposure in many cases. For hay fever, stay indoors in air-conditioned rooms on days when the count of your particular allergen is high in the environment. For perennial allergic rhinitis, use dust-mite covers for pillows and mattresses and an air purifier.

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## Stress Reduction

Stress and fatigue may exacerbate allergies. That's why it is key for allergy sufferers to keep emotional stress in check. Winning stress-reduction strategies include daily aerobic exercise, meditation, prayer, t'ai chi and yoga. Adequate sleep is also essential.

## Exercise

Regular exercise is integral to boosting the immune response and warding off allergies. Talk to the doctor about what type of exercises are right for you.

## Acupuncture

Recent research reveals that acupuncture may be effective in alleviating allergies. One study looked at 80 patients, ages 16 to 70, with persistent allergic rhinitis. Researchers randomly assigned the patients to receive either real or sham acupuncture. The researchers concluded: "Our findings suggest that acupuncture is effective in the symptomatic treatment of PAR [persistent allergic rhinitis]." (*Med J Aust* 2007;187:337-41.)

## Dietary Supplements

In addition to chiropractic care, the doctor may recommend dietary supplements for allergy relief, including the following:

### **Butterbur**

The herb butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) is a shrub-like plant that grows in northern Asia, Europe and parts of North America. Extracts made from the herb have been used in folk medicine for migraines, stomach cramps, coughs, allergies and asthma.

Several recent studies reveal that butterbur may be extremely effective in quelling allergy symptoms. In one analysis, "580 [seasonal allergic rhinitis] patients were treated with an average of 2 tablets of Ze 339 [a butterbur leaf extract] daily for 2 weeks ...

Symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis improved in 90% of patients. Differ-

ences observed before and after therapy were significant and clinically relevant for all symptoms." The researchers concluded: "Butterbur leaf special extract Ze 339 was confirmed by 3 ... trials and 2 postmarketing surveillance trials to be safe and efficacious in the treatment of patients with seasonal allergic rhinitis." (*Adv Ther* 2006;23:373-84.)

Another study in the journal *Annals of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology* concluded that "There is encouraging evidence suggesting that P hybridus [butterbur] may be an effective herbal treatment for seasonal (intermittent) AR." (*Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol* 2007;99:483-95.)



### **Omega-3 Fatty Acids**

Although there are no randomized, controlled trials showing that omega-3 fatty acids are effective treatments for hay fever, there are associations. For example, one German study involving 568 people found that a high content of omega-3 fatty acids in red blood cells or in the diet was associated with a decreased risk of hay fever (*Eur J Clin Nutr* 2005;59:1071-80).

Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids are fish oil capsules (ensure that they are from a quality source and free of heavy metals like mercury), flaxseed oil and walnuts.

### **Spirulina**

Studies suggest that spirulina, a natural immune system stimulant, may help protect against allergic reactions. It appears that spirulina prevents the release of histamines, substances that contribute to symptoms of allergic rhinitis. A 2008 "double blind, placebo controlled study evaluated the

effectiveness and tolerability of spirulina for allergic rhinitis. Compared with placebo, spirulina consumption significantly improved the symptoms and physical findings, including nasal discharge, sneezing, nasal congestion and itching." (*Eur Arch Otorhinolaryngol* 2008 March 15;Epub.)

### **Biminne**

Biminne is a Chinese herbal formula used to treat allergic rhinitis. In a recent study of 58 people with year-round allergic rhinitis, biminne was found to effectively relieve at least some symptoms in most of the participants. Participants took the formula five times a day for 12 weeks, and they continued to enjoy benefits of biminne after one year. The researchers concluded: "Our results suggest the Biminne formulation is effective in treatment of perennial AR." (*Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol* 2002;88:478-87.)

### **Tinospora Cordifolia**

Tinospora Cordifolia (Guduchi) is a medicinal herb popular in India. In one recent study, researchers gave 75 allergic rhinitis patients either tinospora cordifolia (TC) extract or placebo for eight weeks. The researchers concluded: "The difference between TC and placebo groups was highly significant...TC significantly decreased all symptoms of allergic rhinitis." (*J Ethnopharmacol* 2005;96:445-9.)

*Note: Do not begin a supplementation program without first consulting with your doctor of chiropractic.*

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