

## Practical Preventable Medicine



### HAYFEVER AND HISTAMINE

Spring is here, and so is hayfever, and all the associated allergic problems such as asthma and eczema.

So with the air full of pollens, flowers everywhere; allergies can make the most beautiful season a complete misery for some. Itchy eyes, nose, skin, clogged up nose, sinus, and the fatigue that goes with it. So what is actually happening?

Our enemy in this case is a chemical mediator called Histamine. Histamine is stored in Mast cells that are in the greatest concentrations in the respiratory tract, skin and digestive tract. When these cells are exposed to what is seen as a foreign cell that is perceived as an enemy, the mast cells dilate blood vessels, allowing increased fluids to flush the problem away. The next time there is exposure, there are receptor cells on these Mast cells ready for action, and thus releases much more fluids, and can cause excess mucus, itching and swelling of the mucosa, (mucus producing cells). In some people these reactions can be so severe that anaphylaxis can result which can be deadly. Why some people react to certain things and to what degree is a massive topic. However there are some interesting recent developments in science that show that what we are exposed to in our early years has a powerful effect. For instance, exposure to large animals such as horses, cows, goats etc. has a protective effect on being hyper allergic.

Theories also look at a wide exposure to a large variety of foods in very small amounts (a little taste here and there) from a very early age can be beneficial, and is the latest dietary advice to new mothers. Getting dirty, not over disinfecting a child's environment is protective, as is a very low use of anti-biotics and anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ibuprofen. Small amounts of a variety of fermented foods is also great, such as yoghurt, kefir and Kombucha (just small amounts for kids), increases gut flora and also helps a great deal in stabilizing the immune system so that it does not go 'off tap' every time it interacts with a new foreign protein.

When you already have the allergy issue, things you can do to try to keep the mast cells mellow and un-reactive, is to eat a low histamine diet, so that when the inevitable pollens

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etc. hit the air, you are less reactive to them by having less histamine active in your system. Foods to avoid or minimize include, red wine and other alcohols, chocolate, shellfish, bananas, milk, strawberries, processed meats and cheese except ricotta, fetta and cottage cheese. Good foods to eat more of include onion, capers, broccoli and cauliflower, raspberries, bee pollen (only if not allergic to bee products) and unfiltered honey (ask the honey family down at St Andrews market, they have a special honey that's local and therefore helps fortify against local pollens.

Wear an air filter nose mask (like a builders dust mask) when you mow the lawn and shower afterward (interestingly those who react to lawn mowing, it is actually the pheromones of the grass calling meat eaters to save it from the ruminants (bunnies etc..) which is kind of weird and creepy just a little).

There are also plenty of Chinese Herbal pills that are brilliant, and don't make you drowsy, and are best taken daily to prevent as well as treat.

Enjoy your Spring!

Until next time,

Stay well

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