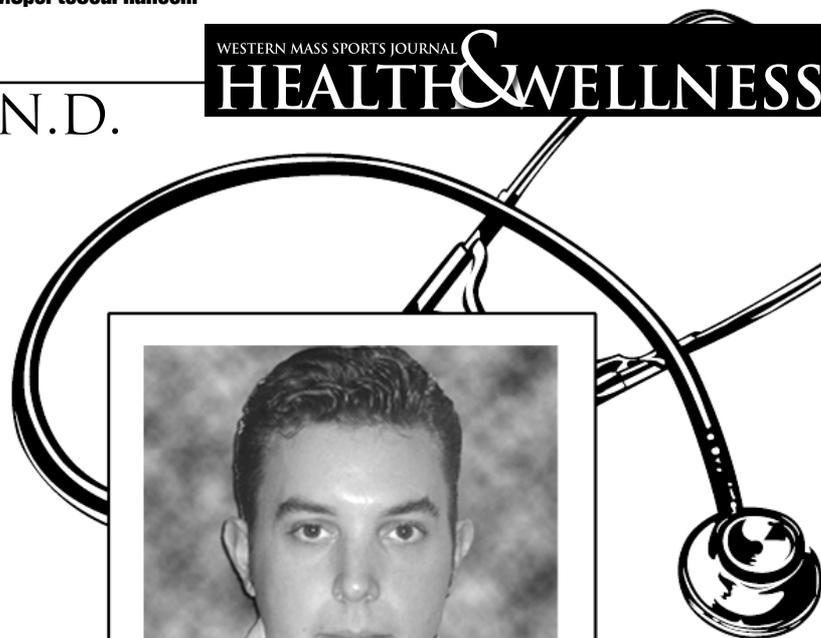


NATUROPATHIC ALLERGY APPROACH



Dr. Frank Aieta, N.D.

It's that time of year again, when the flowers are blooming and the trees are thick with leaves and the air is ... well ... the air is full of pollen. As a result of this pollen, the majority of us are miserable due to seasonal allergies. Such allergies present numerous symptoms, like itchy eyes and throat, a runny nose that becomes clogged and, in some cases, an annoying cough due to post-nasal drip.

In simple terms, an allergy is an over-reactive response of the immune system to certain substances that are foreign to our bodies. These substances are called allergens, and they can range from food and pollen, to drugs and dust. Allergies are something we acquire throughout life, and some people are more susceptible than others. One must have at least one contact with a substance to become sensitive, or allergic, to it.

Conventional treatment of allergies is most commonly directed to block the immune response, or in more severe cases, to suppress the entire immune function with steroids, both topical and systemic. While this approach can provide symptomatic relief, it does nothing to address the underlying cause of the problem. Patients often become dependant on their medication, they suffer from numerous side effects, and most detrimentally, they worsen their overall health by constantly suppressing their immune system.

The naturopathic approach to allergy relief is based on identifying and eliminating the underlying cause of the disease, rather than masking its symptoms.

How does this apply to allergies? As we already know, developing an allergy requires a

prior contact with an offending substance to which the immune system has become sensitive, causing a future over-reaction. The immune system must literally touch the allergen, and for that to happen, the allergen has to penetrate the body's protective barriers, such as skin, intestinal and respiratory mucous membranes, etc.

I have found that most people who suffer from seasonal allergies also have some underlying food allergies. Normally they don't notice many symptoms from the food allergies, but couple allergies from foods with those from the environment and the body becomes overloaded. If the patient has a poor diet, the intestinal barrier can be damaged and food particles can interact with the immune system, which leads to a food allergy.

The obvious first step is to change the person's diet and remove the most allergenic foods through an elimination diet. In some cases, I will run a specific blood test for food allergies as well as environmental allergies such as pollen, grass, dust and mold, among others. Many times, you'll see dramatic results when patients have food allergies that are contributing to their overall allergic picture, and their digestive function is improved through the use of digestive enzymes and herbs.

To help strengthen the respiratory barriers in the nose and lungs, I may recommend a variety of different supplements and herbs. The first supplements I use are Vitamin C and bioflavonoids. Both act to improve the integrity of the respiratory mucus membrane barriers. Vitamin C has the added benefit that it helps the body breakdown the histamine molecule, which is released by the body in response to allergens. A

specific bioflavonoid called quercetin actually works like a natural antihistamine and anti-inflammatory and is extremely effective. Another natural antihistamine that I recommend is an herb called stinging nettles. I recommend a freeze-dried extract of the leaf, which can lead to significant symptom relief.

Finally, I have patients with seasonal allergies take roughly one tablespoon of raw, local honey every day. Studies have shown that it can have an allergen desensitizing effect for patients with certain pollen allergies.

So, if you are an allergy sufferer, visit a naturopathic physician who can work with you to identify contributing food allergies, correct your digestion and recommend some natural treatments for allergy symptom control.

Dr. Frank Aieta is a board-certified and licensed Naturopathic Physician with a private practice in West Hartford, Conn. He specializes in the treatment of disease, using natural therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, spinal manipulation, clinical nutrition, and herbal medicine. If there is a specific topic you would like to see addressed in an upcoming column, you can e-mail him at DrAieta@aol.com, or visit www.DrAieta.com for additional information.

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Dr. Frank L. Aieta
Naturopathic Physician

Tel: 860-232-9662  Fax: 860-206-6160

WWW.DRAIETA.COM

email: DrAieta@aol.com