

NATURAL ANTI-HISTAMINES

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IMPORTANT

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Introduction

Antihistamines are medications that block the body from releasing histamines, which is a substance that produces an inflammatory response. Many people use over-the-counter or prescription antihistamines to treat various allergies, such as allergic rhinitis (hay fever), and other seasonal allergies, etc.

When an allergic reaction occurs, the body's immune system releases histamine. Antihistamines are used to ease symptoms related to allergies, such as congestion, runny nose, contact dermatitis and hives. Some alternatives contain natural antihistamine compounds, and they can help to reduce allergic reactions when they are included in the diet.

Such alternatives include:

Antioxidant Vitamin Supplements

According to the University of Michigan Health System, taking the antioxidant vitamins C and E might be beneficial to seasonal allergy sufferers, due to their ability to stop the production of histamines.

Studies carried out in the 1940s showed that taking between 2,000 and 3,000 mg of vitamin C daily positive results were achieved. However, more recent studies have indicated that the benefits are not so clear-cut.

In 2004 an article in the "*Annals of Allergy and Asthma Immunology*" noted that when vitamin E was added to conventional allergy treatments, symptoms were noted to improve at an accelerated rate.

Butterbur

Butterbur (*Petasites Hybridus*) is a native shrub of Europe, North America, and Asia that has been used by the herbalists for centuries, which may offer the same antihistamine effects as over-the-counter and prescription medications.

Butterbur contains the sesquiterpene compound called Petasin, which provides the antihistamine-like effects. Consequently, Petasin acts to inhibit histamine and leukotriene actions in the body, which helps to reduce inflammation and allergic reactions.

This herb is traditionally used to treat bronchial allergies, such as asthma, in doses of 500 mg daily.

The University of Maryland Medical Centre notes evidence that, for some sufferers, butterbur can be as effective as brand-name allergy medications.

A double-blind study in 2004 of 186 people with intermittent allergic rhinitis found that taking butterbur eased allergy symptoms better than a placebo. The University of Maryland Medical centre recommends taking 500 mg of butterbur daily to reduce allergy symptoms.

A 2005 double-blind study of 330 people, with respiratory allergies, found that taking butterbur extract was equally effective as the antihistamine medication Allegra (University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre).

Echinacea

In her book "*Prescription for Nutritional Healing*", Phyllis A. Balch, CNC, describes Echinacea (*Echinacea Purpurea*) as a healing herb which is used to fight bacteria, inflammation, viruses, and other infectious illnesses related to allergic reactions.

Echinacea builds the immune system and stimulates white blood cell production. Moreover, Echinacea is rich in phytochemical components and loaded with vitamins B1, B2, B3, and C, calcium, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, selenium, and zinc.

Echinacea is truly a wonder herb, but it should not be taken consistently for a prolonged period of time. The recommend frequency is one week on, and one week off.

Essential Oils

Essential oils derived from cloves, chamomile, and lemon have antihistamine properties, and can be a natural substitute for topical antihistamine creams and ointments used to treat allergic skin eruptions.

The oils are volatile and may cause skin irritation, so mix a couple of drops of essential oils with equal parts of vegetable oil. The smooth, greasy texture of the vegetable oil will act as an emollient and will protect the skin from irritation.

Flavonoids

Flavonoids, such as Quercetin and Bromelain, are plant-based pigments that provide many fruits, vegetables and flowers with their colours. They are also natural antihistamines that aid the body in stabilizing mast cells to prevent the production and release of histamine and other inflammatory compounds.

Quercetin is found in citrus fruits, apples, berries, tomatoes, onions, garlic, parsley, lettuce, legumes, broccoli, tea, and wine.

Pineapple and pineapple juice are the only food sources of Bromelain.

Adequate intake of these compounds will boost the immune system, and will help to fight allergic reactions.

Goldenseal

Goldenseal (*Hydrastis Canadensis*) is highly recommended for use as an antihistamine, as it has the ability to fight inflammation and bacteria that is associated with allergies. Over a century ago, Jethro Kloss described Goldenseal's reputation as a healing power in his book "*Back to Eden*", and he called Goldenseal a "cure-all" herb.

Studies have shown that goldenseal strengthens several parts of the body including the immune, gastrointestinal, lymphatic, and respiratory systems. This herb can also be relied upon to combat colds, flu, and sore throats.

According to some authorities, goldenseal should not be used for prolonged periods, and not by pregnant women, or nursing mothers.

Goldenseal should be taken alternatively with Echinacea; and persons allergic to ragweed are advised not to use goldenseal.

Grape Seed Extract

Grape seed extract is known to control sneezing, congestion, itchy eyes, and other symptoms of allergic reactions. Grape seed extract is also an anti-inflammatory agent, which inhibits the release of prostaglandins, or chemicals that generate inflammation during allergic responses.

Grape seed extract is particularly helpful in preventing allergic skin reactions, such as hives and eczema; and these benefits can be gained by eating grapes, drinking wine, or taking grape seed extract supplements.

Green Tea and Raw Honey

Green tea and raw local honey are both antihistamines.

Green tea is calming as well as beneficial in fighting allergic reactions. Raw honey is also considered an anti-inflammatory agent and an immune booster.

Local honey is processed along with local allergens and tree pollen. Therefore, by eating local honey, the individual is consuming trace amounts of local allergens, and this will help the body to build defences against them.

Green tea and raw honey can be taken together to gain the antihistamine benefits of both.

Herbal Teas

Herbal teas can also inhibit the secretion of histamines.

Chamomile and ginger are herbs with natural antihistamine properties. Chamomile tea, especially when sweetened with honey, will help to relieve allergy symptoms. Ginger has a number of medicinal properties, and is best when the root is ground up. tea can also be made with boiling water, ginger root, and honey, which is soothing and beneficial at the same time.

Teas made from ginger, peppermint, or amaranth seeds may all help minimize hives that crop up as a result of allergies.

Horny Goat Weed

Horny goat weed has a natural antihistamine effect that reduces the levels of allergic reaction-related immune cells (University of Michigan Health System).

A 1989 study conducted in China found that horny goat weed helped to effectively treat allergic rhinitis symptoms and reduced allergic reactions.

Additionally, a 1997 study found that certain flavonoids contained in horny goat weed had stimulating and inhibiting effects on the immune system, and helped to suppress the immune system actions involved in allergic reactions.

Tea can be made a by simmering 1 tsp. of horny goat weed in 1 pint of water for 10 to 15 minutes.

The tea should be drunk, hot or cold, three x daily for the positive antihistamine effects.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential fatty acids that have beneficial anti-inflammatory properties. Omega-3 is found primarily in cold-water fish like salmon, herring, halibut, tuna, and trout.

Flaxseeds, walnuts, and soybeans are also high in omega-3.

Eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids at least three times per week for maximum benefit.

Papaya

Papaya is very rich in vitamin C, with each piece of whole fruit containing more than 300 per cent of the recommended daily allowance. Moreover, enzymes found in papaya can help to regulate inflammatory response in the body. "*The Green Pharmacy Herbal Handbook*" suggests that by eating papaya, or drinking papaya juice, there is an antihistamine effect which relieves the itching associated with hives, etc.

Stinging Nettle

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica Dioica*) is a powerful herb that carries an abundance of phytochemicals and essential nutrients, and when consumed it becomes a potent healer. Nettle is therapeutic for arthritis, rheumatism, hay fever, other allergic disorders, inflammatory conditions, kidney problems, the lungs, and most importantly it is a powerful antihistamine.

Taking an extract of stinging nettle may help to reduce allergy symptoms and may act as an antihistamine (University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre). One double-blind clinical trial found that taking nettle leaf helped to decrease symptoms related to hay fever (University of Michigan Health System).

In 1990 a study involved people with allergic rhinitis (hay fever) and used freeze-dried nettle leaf (University of Maryland Medical Centre). Consequently, for antihistamine effect, take 600 mg stinging nettle daily, for at least one week.

The University of Maryland Medical Centre suggests taking 600 mg of stinging nettle each day for a week to ease symptoms of allergic rhinitis (hay fever). However, stinging nettle may cause an increase in urination, so be especially careful if diuretic medications are being used.

This herbal therapy may be taken in the form of tea or tablets. However, it should be noted that results from nettle therapy may take several weeks; therefore, it is wise to begin taking nettle before allergy season occurs.

Tinospora Cordifolia

The herb *Tinospora Cordifolia* may offer antihistamine effects and may possibly help to treat allergic rhinitis (University of Pittsburgh Medical centre).

A 2005 double-blind clinical trial found that taking 300 mg of *Tinospora* standardized extract, three x daily for two months, this reduced allergic rhinitis symptoms substantially better than a placebo (University of Michigan Health System).

Tylophora

The herb Tylophora, which is often used in Ayurvedic medicine, has an antihistamine and an anti-inflammatory effect. Studies have indicated that Tylophora inhibits mast cells in the lung airways from releasing histamines (University of Michigan).

For antihistamine effects and allergy symptom relief, take 200 to 400 mg daily of dried Tylophora for up to two weeks.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C, or ascorbic acid, is a water-soluble vitamin with a plethora of health benefits. It functions as a powerful antioxidant to fight infection, and as a natural antihistamine to reduce the effects of the chemical "histamine" on the body.

Excellent sources of vitamin C include bananas, berries, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, citrus fruits, green leafy vegetables, fruit juice, guava, kale, kiwi fruit, lima beans, mango, melon, papaya, peaches, peas, peppers, squash, tomatoes, turnips, and yams. These are all good options to help you meet your daily vitamin C requirement.

Foods rich in vitamin C are best eaten fresh, as cooking, processing and storing destroy ascorbic acid.

Vitamin C supplements can also be used.

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