

Asheville's Guide to Allergy Season



By Jacquelyn Dobrinska

April showers bring May flowers, sending many Ashevilleans into the mountains to explore. Unfortunately, 10-30 percent of us run for cover, trying to avoid the watery eyes, sneezing, running nose, need-to-nap symptoms of hay fever season. For those who suffer, alternative remedies can offer much-needed support.

"It's like getting hit by a Mack Truck," says Sarah Wells, a local counselor and seasonal allergy sufferer.

Most people blame it on the pollen. In April, the trees release their reproductive male gametophyte, which rides on the wind. In early summer, the grasses take their turn. Later in the fall, the weeds get busy.

Yet, pollen is only part of the equation. The real problem is the immune system. When functioning properly, it keeps pathogens and harmful invaders out. Engaged in battle, it uses tools that often feel uncomfortable—congestion, watery eyes and fevers. In allergy sufferers, the immune system confuses pollen with harmful pathogens and reacts as if it were fighting a virus—hence, the Mack Truck.

So what can you do? "Eating local honey is a great way to build up resistance," says local allergy sufferer David Robertson, Ph.D., a Ro-Hun Therapist. Think of it like a vaccine in which a micro-dose staves off a future full-blown attack. Unlike with a vaccine, however, you need to take it for weeks leading up to allergy season. Use local honey, or the more concentrated bee pollen, so it will contain your specific variety of allergens. Asheville Bee Charmer is a great source for both.

An infusion of nettles (*Urtica dioica*), the weed that stings you, also helps reduce allergies. Used daily for weeks prior, it nourishes every system and may help correct the immune system's confusion. Red Moon Herbs offers nettles—and don't worry, the dried leaves no longer sting.

If you are already suffering an acute attack, you want immediate relief. Nettles, prepared as a tincture, aids us here as well. Brandi Mizilca, a local dancer at Jerusalem Garden Cafe and an allergy sufferer, swears by an herbal formula, which includes nettles, eyebright, horehound, elecampane and several other herbal remedies.

Homeopathic medicine is another powerful ally. "I received an enormous hug from an Earth Fare customer weeks after I recommended King Bio's homeopathic spray for regional allergies," says Caroline Richardson, a Phoenix Rising practitioner and former health consultant. "It's a



game changer, and if it doesn't work, you can return it for store credit."

Lastly, don't forget your vitamins and to minimize exposure. Both vitamin C, and quercetin help decrease the inflammation associated with allergies. A daily neti pot washes pollen out of the sinuses. Showering after being outside and using a dryer for clothing rather than hanging on a line also helps.

This article contains general information about medical conditions and complementary treatment, and is not to be considered expert medical advice. Always consult your primary health provider before making changes. Jackie Dobrinska is a wellness coach in Asheville. Reach her at asimplevibrantlife.com.

