

# Ayurveda - Health notes

## Allergies

Vital Health Topic: Spring Does Not Have to be Synonymous with Allergies!

Ayurveda attributes seasonal allergies to imbalances in the physiology caused by a reactive type of digestive toxin called amavisha. Ama, the simpler initial form of digestive impurities, is created because of imperfect digestion. If the accumulation of ama in the digestive tract is not corrected, the ama eventually travels to different organs or tissues in the body and over time gets transformed into the more reactive amavisha.

Allergens such as dust or pollen interact with the amavisha, creating an allergic reaction. It is the reactive nature of amavisha that causes allergic reactions. Wherever they interact and interfere, these toxins make it hard for the cells to function properly in that part of the body.

Signs of amavisha vary depending on which part of the body the amavisha is located. If the amavisha/allergen combination affects the skin, the result could be rashes, discoloration, roughness or irritation. The same mixture in the lungs is linked to respiratory allergies. Amavisha/allergens in the intestinal tract causes GI tract allergy or diarrhea.

But it's important to understand that it's not the allergens themselves that are causing the allergic reaction. Many other people breathe the same pollen, the same ragweed, and they have no reaction whatsoever. It's the presence of amavisha in the physiology that makes the allergens create such a reaction.

Amavisha has an additional, more long-term effect: it disrupts the natural balance of the immune system. When the immune system is affected by the accumulation of amavisha, it loses its adaptability-its ability to regain equilibrium when confronted with sudden change.

For instance, when spring begins, and new plants bloom and release pollen, or the weather shifts between hot and cold or humid and dry, these dramatic changes in the environment challenge the immune system. In normal circumstances, the person can adapt. But if the immune system is already taxed by the presence of amavisha, and therefore can't respond to seasonal change with normal flexibility, the body succumbs to imbalance, and starts to express allergic symptoms.

### **DETOXIFYING TO CORRECT THE IMBALANCE**

In ayurveda we have a principle: detoxify the body at the end of each season, before the new season begins. This is recommended because the weather and environment during one season will impact the body and create certain imbalances, causing the body to accumulate ama or amavisha. You need to flush out those toxins before the next season starts, in order to prepare the body to confront the changes it will be facing.

Another reason for seasonal detoxification is to cleanse the shrotas, the microchannels that carry nutrient fluid to the cells and carry waste products away from the cells. If the shrotas are clogged with toxins, then the immune system is slowed down.

Detoxification is especially important if you are prone to allergies. Starting a detoxification program just before the onset of spring will help to rid your body of impurities that have accumulated during winter.

Avoid eating heavy, indigestible foods such as ice cream and other ice-cold foods and drinks, heavy desserts, oily or fried foods, sour yogurt, red meat, and hard cheeses. Also avoid leftovers, packaged, canned, frozen or processed foods of any kind, as these are difficult to digest and include chemicals or preservatives that tax the liver and lead to the formation of amavisha.

Instead, eat a light, nourishing diet of cooked, lightly spiced organic, fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains and dhal soups for protein.

Sip hot water throughout the day to help eliminate toxins. Get plenty of rest and enjoy mild exercise such as walking every day.

Dr Donn Brennan , ayurvedic expert, recommends the Maharishi Ayurveda herbal supplements Elim-Tox or Elimtox Pitta for cleansing the liver of toxins. These formulas also help remove toxins through the sweat, the blood, the urine and bowels. For detoxifying the body, it's also essential that your elimination is working well. Make sure you have one or two bowel movements a day, with one in the morning when you rise. To help regularity, take 2-4 Herbal Cleanse tablets or 3-5 Triphla with Rose tablets before bed.

### **DIETARY TIPS FOR SPRING**

Once spring starts, follow the seasonal diet recommended for that season, taking into account your body type and individual needs for balance. For instance, spring is the Kapha season, when there is more of the heavy, earthy, watery Kapha dosha predominant. So the ayurvedic dietary recommendations are to eat more pungent, bitter and astringent foods. But spring allergies also have to do with the reactivity of amavisha, so you'll want to pacify Pitta, too, especially if you are a Pitta type. This means going easy on the pungent spices. Avoid chillies and cayenne, but mildly pungent spices such as ginger and black pepper are fine in small quantities.

To continue to detoxify your body during the allergy season, eat lots of green vegetables and summer squashes, such as courgette. These are cooling and pacify the reactivity of amavisha. Hard winter squashes such as pumpkin and butternut squash, on the other hand, are not recommended as they are more difficult to digest.