



Seasonal Congestion

Dealing with springtime colds, allergies and congestion

When spring rolls around and the long nights and cold days of winter are coming to an end, many people develop various respiratory problems such as colds, sinus drainage and coughs. As spring flowers come into bloom, respiratory allergies also become a problem for many. Fortunately, there are natural ways of dealing with these problems, but first, we need to understand what is happening in the body.

The sinuses and lungs are lined with mucous membranes. These membranes are coated with a thin layer of mucus, which serves as a protective substance. It keeps these membranes moist, and traps dust, pollen and other particulate matter in the air to protect these delicate tissues. Tiny hairlike projections called cilia continually sweep this mucus out of the lungs and sinuses along with any “garbage” which may be trapped in the mucus.

Sometimes, the mucous membranes are secreting an excessive amount of thin, watery mucus (as in allergies and the early stages of a cold). The mucus can also become too thick and goopy, so that it doesn't move freely. This creates congestion. It can “plug up the sinuses,” block the absorptive surfaces of the tiny sacs in the lungs called alveoli and constrict the passageways of the bronchi, inhibiting the natural breathing and air exchange processes.

What causes this excess mucus or congestion? It's primarily arising from the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is designed to remove waste fluids from every tissue in the body and to clean up these fluids before returning them to the circulatory system. Physical movement promotes lymphatic flow. During the winter, people are more sedentary and their body may accumulate an excessive load of toxins in the tissues. Winter also puts a greater stress on the lungs—especially when we breathe through our mouths, the colder, dryer air can actually burn the tissues of the lung, just as meat left in a freezer gets freezer-burn. This leads to irritation of the tissues and diminishes the lungs' ability to breathe and to cleanse, setting the stage for the vicious circle of diminished function—increased irritation and build-up of toxins—and further reduction in ability to function.

In spring, as more cleansing foods become available and people become more active, the body may start a detoxification process to eliminate this build-up from winter. Normally, these toxins will get dumped into the colon, but if the colon isn't able to eliminate them all, whatever remains will be brought up to the mucous membranes of the respiratory system—hopefully to be swept out of the body by the cleansing action of these mucous membranes. Thin, watery mucus is a sign the body is trying to flush an irritant. Thick mucus is a sign of a congested lymphatic

system that is overloaded with toxins and possible dehydration of the tissues.

Various herbal remedies can be used, along with plenty of water, to help this spring detoxification process. ALJ is one of the best all-around formulas for treating almost every type of respiratory problem and can be very helpful in expelling mucus from the lungs and sinuses. Seasonal Defense is another formula that can help clear the lungs and sinuses of excess mucus and reduce allergic responses. It was formulated specifically to help with respiratory problems during seasonal changes.

For spring allergies, HistaBlock is a formula specifically designed to reduce allergic reactions, naturally. Four is another formula that has helped many people desensitize themselves to spring pollen.

There are also some more serious respiratory conditions people may develop. One of these is bronchitis, an inflammation of the small tubes which form the main air passages of the lungs. Bronchitis is usually a result of a respiratory infection. Bronchial Formula is an Ayurvedic herbal blend that is particularly helpful for overcoming this bronchial inflammation. Astragalus and ALJ can also be helpful.

Another specific condition is pneumonia, in which the lungs themselves are infected by bacteria, viruses or fungi, causing inflammation and fluid accumulation. Symptoms of pneumonia are cough with green/yellow mucus, fever with shaking chills, sharp or stabbing chest pain, which is worsened by deep breathing or coughing, rapid, shallow breathing or shortness of breath. Large doses of ALJ (3-4 capsules) taken every two hours along with one tablet of High Potency Garlic can be very helpful for pneumonia. (Medical attention should be sought, of course.)

Pleurisy is a third specific respiratory condition, involving inflammation of the pleura, the moist, double-layered lining that surrounds the lungs and lines the rib cage. It can cause painful and difficult breathing, coughing and accumulation of fluid or fibrous tissues in the thoracic cavity. The combination Four is particularly helpful for pleurisy because it contains pleurisy root, an herb which gets its name from its ability to help this condition.

These are just a few of the many remedies that can help with respiratory problems during the spring (or any other time of the year). For additional information on dealing with respiratory problems naturally, consult your local herb specialist. Additional information on these problems can also be found in *The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products*, *Dr. Mom-Dr. Dad* and *The ABC+D Approach to Natural Health*.

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