

From the Owner of Rhythm of Healing - Creator of the Spring Cleanse

# Blossom Into Your Best Self

A Spring Wellness Guide for Allergy Relief, Sinusitis  
Solace and Hay Fever Help



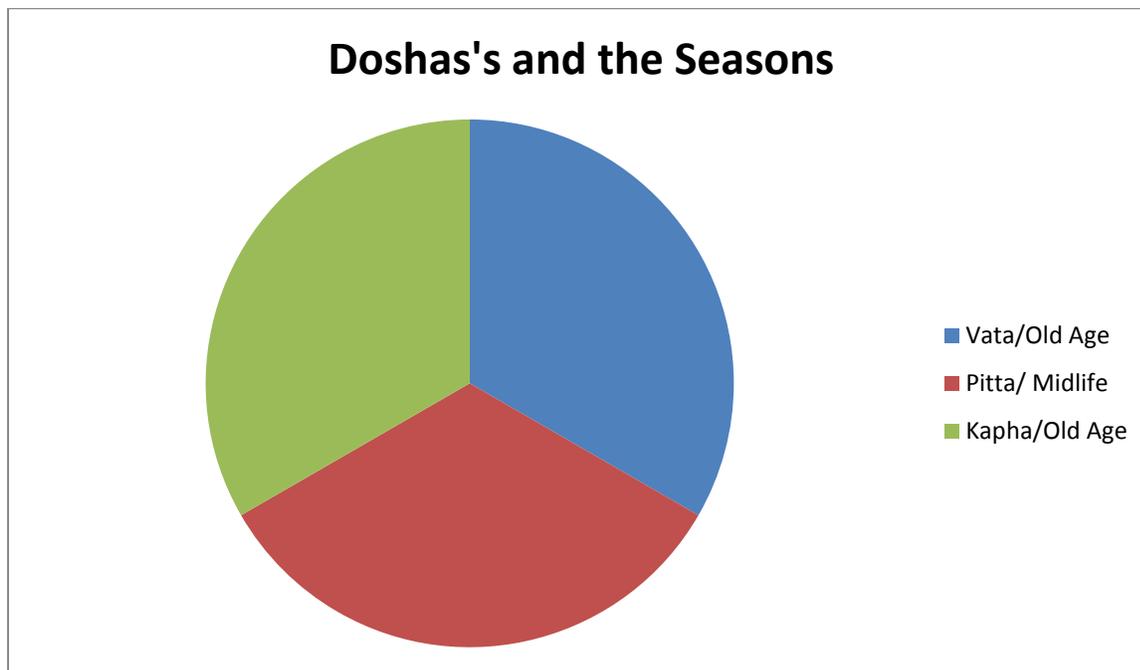
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# Introduction

In Ayurveda each season relates to a stage of life. As the dark days of winter retire and the youthful spring sprouts and blossoms emerge we enter an ideal season to cleanse our bodies.. In the Northern Hemisphere, spring officially begins on the Spring equinox on March 21<sup>st</sup>.



Not only is spring the most youthful of the seasons, she is also the Queen of the seasons. She is moist, receptive, devotional and loving. These two patterns of activity combine to create a time of sunshine, love and creativity. Spring's qualities are warm, moist, gentle, and unctuous. That is why spring is most often associated with *Kapha*. Spring's warmth melts the cold of winter and mobilizes the accumulated *Kapha* (the mind-body force responsible for lubrication and sustained energy) into a liquefied state.

This movement of *Kapha* is what is responsible for the colds and allergies that accompany spring such as runny noses, asthma and congestion. In addition to the physical symptoms the accumulation of *Kapha* can make you feel lazy, greedy, or attached. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, this will guide you through keeping *Kapha* in balance this spring. As you move into balance pay close attention to what you are releasing and what you are gathering.

## Drink More Juice

In the spring it is common to do some kind of cleanse. Often this involves fresh vegetable juice. While drinking a green juice can provide the body with nutrients and chlorophyll (which will bring oxygen into the blood and improve circulation, detoxification and energy) it can also spike the blood sugar. A spike in blood sugar raises *kapha* and when there is too much *Kapha* the body increases *Pitta* in the form of inflammation in order to rid the body of stagnation. Short term this is a natural process, but when it becomes chronic it can lead to hormone imbalances. Juicing can be a very effective short-term technique to relieve symptoms, especially when using celery, cucumber, parsley, carrots and beets with a little ginger root, but some simple additions can help keep blood sugar in check. In order to keep the blood sugar balanced when juicing or making green smoothies include fiber, protein and fat. Here are some suggestions:

### Fat

- 1–2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1– 2 tablespoons ghee or raw butter (if dairy is tolerated)
- 2 tablespoons avocado

### Fiber

- 1 tablespoon freshly ground flax seed
- 1 tablespoon ground or whole chia seeds
- Make a green smoothie instead of a juice or add back in some of the fiber that is filtered from the juicer.

### Protein

- 1 tablespoon ground or whole hemp seeds
- 1 teaspoon local bee pollen
- 1/2 teaspoon pea protein powder

## Eat with Nature

When the weather is cool the body adapts by turning up the heat. As the temperature rises in the spring your *Agni* (digestive fire) is relatively low. That's why you will need to eat less than you did in winter. The light quality is the key to spring cuisine. Fewer calories and leaner fat will bring your body and mind in tune with spring's bounty. Here are some suggestions:

## Seasonal Choices

When our ancestors lived off the land, spring provided foods that were predominantly bitter, pungent, and astringent. Beans that mature early in the year like green beans or astringent legumes (yellow split peas, red lentils, garbanzos, pinto beans etc.) are great choices for spring cuisine.

Seasonal spring cooking also includes the drying and warming grains such as barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, or oats. Early spring vegetables such as broccoli, radishes, spinach, okra, asparagus, artichokes, and onions are good choices. Warm fresh spices like garlic, ginger, rosemary, thyme, and basil keep *Kapha* at bay. Hot chili peppers, although they ripen later in the year, can also be helpful. Bitter greens such as dandelion, kale, leaf lettuces and spinach will also help reduce *Kapha*. Crisper fruits that have less water such as apples, pomegranates, and rhubarb can be eaten in moderation.

## **Avoid cold, heavy foods.**

The hardest part of spring can be weaning yourself off the heavier winter foods that could be eaten when the *agni* was high. Dairy products are best avoided as well as excess meat, and fried foods.

## **Live with Nature**

Ayurveda does not prescribe a one size fits all diet. It recognizes that as dynamic individuals we are constantly changing and so we will be better supported by a system or an approach that can be learned and applied to multiple situations. Seasonal lifestyle recommendations are great for the spring because they counterbalance the dark days of winter and wake us up to the fullness of life. We can never control Mother Nature nor the changes she brings. Simply being aware of the time is the key. Time is an important factor in the life of every mortal, and living according to Nature's time is the only way to remain healthy. The following sample daily schedule can help you stay aware of time:

### **SPRING (VASANTA)**

#### **MORNING**

1. Wake up around 5:30 ready to celebrate life
2. Wash your face, brush your teeth, gargle with sesame oil, scrape your tongue and lubricate your nostrils
3. Drink warm lemon water
4. Meditate for 20 minutes on new life and new intentions
5. Exfoliate your skin with a dry brush
6. Perform abhyanga and then take a hot shower

#### **DAY**

1. Exercise outdoors

2. Start new projects
3. Try an elimination diet

## EVENING

1. Journal or recapitulate on your day and see how you are acting in accordance with your new intentions

Early spring is cooler and moister while late spring is warmer. These qualities combine the stability of earth, fluidity of water and heat of fire. The elements are what create the creativity and dynamism of spring that allows for rebirth. The first step in a spring lifestyle is to do some “house cleaning”. As the primary principle of a spring diet is lightness, cleaning house will create space for the new that is necessary for new routines and rituals to be established. This will combat the excess of *kapha* leads to lethargy, depression and sluggish digestion.

# Allergies

Allergies are common in the spring as pollens are released into the air. As substances like pollens come into the body, sometimes the body over-reacts by producing an excess of one of the *dosha*'s in the hopes of removing the substance/allergen from the body. Thus the approach to allergies is dependent on the qualities of the symptoms and how they relate to the *doshas* (more than one *dosha* may be involved.)

## Vata Type Allergies

The flavor or taste that is most aggravating to *Vata* is the bitter taste. Thus *Vata* type allergies act are similar to the body's reaction to consuming too much of the bitter taste. When we eat too much bitter food, like dandelion greens or black coffee, we experience the same digestive upset characteristic of *Vata* allergies such as excess burping and gas. If the allergies are not remedied quickly then bloating, gurgling intestines and vague abdominal pain can arise. In addition to the digestive discomfort, the constrictive quality of the bitter taste can cause more pronounced symptoms are such as wheezing, sneezing, ringing in the ears, joint pain, muscle spasms or difficulty falling asleep. *Vata* type allergies do best by avoiding bitter and astringent foods such as beans and leafy greens like dandelion. Slowing down, keeping warm and staying hydrated (as if you had a cold) can also help bring the body back on track.

## ***Pitta* Type Allergies**

The flavor most aggravating to *Pitta* is the pungent/spicy taste and this is reflected in the way *Pitta* allergies manifest. The hot, sharp qualities of a spicy food are imitated by the allergen which causes skin discomfort and possibly affects the blood. Examples of *Pitta* type allergic reactions include red, hot rashes such as hives, allergic dermatitis and eczema, all of which cause itching. Just like too much spicy food, *Pitta* allergies can lead to heartburn, acid indigestion, nausea, or vomiting. Rarer symptoms are bloodshot eyes and hot flashes. When *Pitta* is high avoid spicy foods and sour or acidic foods like vinegar. As *Pitta* may affect the blood consider giving blood and eating more cooling foods like burdock root. If the skin is especially sensitive try these home remedies:

1. Place a handful of fresh cilantro in a blender with about ⅓ cup water and blend. Strain the pulp, saving the juice. If you enjoy cilantro you can drink the juice and then apply the pulp to the affected area.
2. If you have aloe vera plants around the house cut off a leaf and peel the skin exposing the gelatinous core. Apply the gel to the affected area.

## ***Kapha* Type Allergies**

The flavor aggravating to *Kapha* allergies is sweet, and this type of allergy is the most likely caused by the excess amount of sweet foods consumed over the winter months. The sweet taste is cold, heavy and moist. It clogs the channels of the sinus passages and respiratory tract leading to irritation of the mucus membranes, congestion, coughing and water retention. The coughing and congestion can make it difficult to sleep and also lead to sluggish digestion and heaviness. Foods that are heavy and sweet like dairy products, wheat and melons are best avoided for those experiencing *Kapha* type allergies. In order to unblock the channels, choose activities that keep you warm, dry and active. Spicy teas like ginger tea can help wake up the body and eliminate the allergens.

## **When More than One *Dosha* is Affected**

When more than one *dosha* is affected it can be helpful to take a more general approach. This approach can be excellent for improving your baseline sense of wellness in the spring.

## Protect Yourself

You can't insulate yourself from everything, but staying informed and minimizing your exposure to allergens can be a very powerful strategy. The [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology](#) keeps an accurate and up to date resource for pollen levels. Monitor pollen levels in your area to determine when it is best to stay indoors. Regular changing of air filters in your home and the cabin filter in your car can be another way to minimize your exposure to certain allergens. Keep your house extra clean during this time of year in order to minimize your exposure to other particulates in the air that may predispose you towards allergens. Diffusing an essential oil blend such as equal parts lemon, lavender and peppermint during the day can also be beneficial.

## Take Quercetin and Nettles

While not a traditional Ayurvedic remedy Quercetin, an antioxidant that belongs to a category of water-soluble plant substances called flavonoids, can assist you. Many foods are high in quercetin such as apples, berries, red grapes, red onions, capers and black tea. During and slightly before allergy season take 800 mg twice a day or 400 mg three times a day for a total of 1,200 – 1600 mg per day. Stop taking Quercetin after allergy season is over.

Nettles are another beneficial herbal therapy for spring allergies. The seeds seem to be most effective and the fresher they are the better, but capsules of the leaves can also be used. About 300 mg a day or 1/2 teaspoon three times a day for the best results.

Consuming local honey and bee pollen can acclimate the body to the pollens present in your area. This help to keep the immune system from responding to them as invaders.

## Gargle with Supportive Liquids

Not all allergic symptoms are associated with a sore throat, but if your throat is aggravated consider making a gargle.

Mix 1 cup of warm/hot water with 1 tsp of salt a drip of honey and one of the following herbs.

- pinch powdered clove
- pinch of ginger powder
- pinch of cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder

## Meditate to Become More Stress Resilient

Allergies are an over-reaction to a harmless substance like pollen. The body becomes overprotective, which is usually linked to high levels of stress. Therefore, mounting a more efficient response to stress levels in a healthy way can be useful in improved allergy recovery times or reducing symptoms. Stress resilience can be improved through the following strategies:

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Taking baths

It only takes 10-15 minutes a day of practicing stress resilience to profoundly impact your allergy symptoms.

## Breathe

Many of the common spring symptoms of imbalance compromise our ability to breathe. By practicing breathing every day you can better insulate yourself from the adverse effects of spring allergies. Like the stress resilience measures mentioned above, breathing can balance the nervous system and lessen the triggers leading to allergies, asthma and lethargy. Here are a few breathing exercises to consider:

- *Breathing the Spine.* Inhale and feel the breath move from the base of the spine up towards the collarbones. Exhale and feel the breath moving down the front of the spine from the collarbones to the base of the spine. Do this for five breaths or five minutes.
- *Expansive breath.* Take an inhale and experience the expansion of the torso and belly. Maintain the expansive feeling through the back as you exhale. Continue for five breaths or five minutes.

## Daily Movement or Exercise

In order to maintain the quality of lightness that is vital to health this spring, it is important to spend time moving every day. This can mean walking, dancing, yoga, tai chi, weight lifting or any other movement that calls to you. The key is to spend at least 15 minutes a day doing something that awakens the body and centers the mind. Studies on willpower show that it only takes a five minute walk around the block to improve your confidence and improve your commitment to your willpower goals.

## Diversity Distilled

Remember that you are an individual and it is unrealistic for a guide like this to speak fully to the living wisdom within you. Ayurveda is an excellent tool for personalizing recommendations for your particular needs and creating effective treatment strategies. In order to reap the rewards of Ayurveda it is important to know yourself. This includes understanding your particular constitution, imbalance, vitality, digestive capacity, work demands, etc. By understanding where you are and setting a course for where you want to be, Ayurveda can provide the tools that are critical and supportive for you as an individual. An Ayurvedic practitioner can help you become more aware of your situation and help you understand the many factors affecting your imbalance. This way you may choose a strategy that will help heal the root of your particular imbalances.

## Hay Fever

Hay Fever is a common hypersensitivity reaction (allergy) in the spring. Tree, grass or weed pollens, house dust, animal dander and certain foods can create discomfort in the upper respiratory tract, ears, eyes, nose and throat. When these substances are inhaled and trapped in the upper respiratory tract an antibody response encourages the release of vasoactive amines like histamine. In order to remove the pollen, histamine promotes local inflammation, constriction of the bronchi and an increase in white blood cells (which to destroy the pollen.) Hay fever is a hyper reaction whereby sneezing, itchy eyes, itchy ears and nasal mucous production creates a level of discomfort. Repeated attacks lead to viral, bacterial and fungal infections, chronic congestion and an enhanced sensitivity to smells, color, light and sound.

### Too Much *Kapha*

Like most spring complaints, *kapha* is to blame for hay fever. The normal and necessary functions of *kapha* that maintain the structure of the body by lubricating, moisturizing and nourishing become aggravated. This happens when the cold weather of winter and rich holiday foods cause an increase in *kapha*. As the weather warms, the icy layers of *kapha* melt and flood the channels of the body with fluids. The rush of water to the upper body dilutes digestive function and creates chronic respiratory tract infections or hay fever. All ancient cultures have found strategies to combat hay fever—many of which include cleansing.

Like all interventions, results are highly dependent on the depth and duration of the condition. The steps below can help create relief within a week and resolution after a month. However, aspects of this treatment may need to be employed at the same time every year or practiced continually for prolonged success.

1. **Reduce Inflammation** As the inflammatory response is the main reason for the acute symptoms, it must be brought under control to stop degradation of the tissues. The true cause of hay fever, however, is the digestive weakness which is caused by excess *kapha* leading to low quality mucosa. Therefore, reducing inflammation only provides symptomatic relief.
  - Anti-inflammatory herbs or those with a specific action on the mucosa and respiratory system are useful. These include:
    - Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)
    - Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*)
    - Katuka (*Picrorrhiza kuroa*)
    - Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)
    - Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)
    - Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*)
  - Non-herbal anti-inflammatories can also be useful
    - Omega 3 fatty acids (GLA, EPA, DHA)
    - B-vitamins Pantothenic acid (vitamin B5), Pyridoxine and pyridoxal-5-phosphate (vitamin B6),
2. **Improve Digestion.** The primary cause of allergies is digestive weakness. Therefore, it is best to eliminate foods that cause us to produce mucus, such as dairy and flour, and to treat leaky-gut if it is present. This can be achieved by not overeating, by not eating after 7pm, and by avoiding alcohol and fried foods.
  - Digestive Stimulants help to remove stagnation and improve spleen and liver function.
    - Katuka (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*)
    - Bhunimba (*Andrographis paniculata*)
    - Calamus (*Acorus calamus*)
    - Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
    - Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
    - Ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*)
    - Triphala, mixture of amalaki, bibitaki and haritaki.

3. **Rejuvenate mucosa and lungs.** In addition to enhancing digestive strength, the weakness in the lungs and their deranged mucosal lining must be remedied.
  - Respiratory tonics and demulcents that can be helpful can be useful. These include:
    - Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)
    - Pippali (*Piper longum*)
    - Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
    - Elecampane(*Inula helenium*)
    - Vasaka (*Adatodha vasica*)
    - Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
    - Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*)
  - Supplements that improve vitality of the mucosa
    - Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin E
4. **Rejuvenate Immune System.** Typically, steps one and two are completed before steps 3 and 4 are implemented. The final step is used to restore long term balance to the system.
  - Immune and Endocrine Tonics that restore this balance are:
    - Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)
    - Amalaki(*Emblica officinalis*)
    - Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris*)
    - Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*)
    - Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*),
    - Brahmi (*Bacopa monniera*)
    - Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*)
    - Zinc
    - Magnesium

## Sinusitis

Sinusitis is a common condition that is not only present in the spring, but year round. It is characterized by infection leading to inflammation of one or more of the paranasal sinuses (frontal, sphenoid and maxillary sinuses). This sinus congestion causes pain, pressure, headache and local tenderness. This is because the outflow tracts of all the sinuses are not functioning properly. The mucus stagnates from lack of movement and becomes a breeding ground for bacterial and fungal infections.

## A condition with many colors

Sinusitis can have either of *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha* origin.

*Vata* type sinusitis is characterized by a dry throat, scanty mucus, excessive sneezing, hoarseness, and pain in the head. Other *vata* symptoms like constipation, anxiety, and exhaustion may also be present. *Vata*'s dryness in the sinus passages stops the movement of mucus and creates an environment for infection. The primary treatment for *vata* type sinusitis is to hydrate the nasal and sinus mucosa.

- **Humidification**, especially at night, with essential oils (e.g. Spruce, Eucalyptus, Rosemary, Cedar, Pine, etc.) can lubricate the sinus passages
- **Nasya** is the practice of applying an oil to the nostrils. Drip 3-5 drops of sesame oil or a medicated oil into the nostrils 3-5 times a day and then lay on your back for 1 minute to allow the oil to permeate the sinus passages.
- **Neti Pot** is the practice of pouring warm salt water through the nasal passages. Then, *nasya* can be practiced either immediately after neti pot, or at another time of day. Do not blow your nose immediately after performing neti as this can drive bacteria deeper into the sinus passages. If you have mucus to dislodge clear your throat and spit it out.

*Pitta* type sinusitis symptoms are a yellowish to red mucus, fever, and burning sensations. The heat of *pitta* invites inflammation and infection into the sinus passages and is best treated by anti-inflammatories and cooling herbs such as these:

- Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*)
- Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
- Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)
- Kalmegh (*Andrographis paniculata*)
- Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*)

*Kapha* sinusitis comes with a thick whitish discharge, a swollen face and sleepiness. Sometimes itching of the throat, mouth, lips and head may be part of *kapha* symptoms. *Kapha* symptoms can be relieved by decongesting the lymph and loosening and clearing mucus. The following herbs are helpful for this process:

- Manjishta (*Rubia cordifolia*)
- Ginger (*Zingiber*)

- Pippali (*Piper longum*)
- Ela (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
- Elecampane (*Inula helenium*)

As all three conditions arise from an environment where mucus and bacteria can flourish. The primary recommendation for all three varieties is to remove toxins from the body. Toxins are primarily removed through the liver and the kidneys.

- Liver Tonics
  - Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)
  - Bhumyamalaki (*Phyllanthus amarus*)
  - Kutki (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*)
  - Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*).
- Kidney Tonics
  - Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
  - Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*)
  - Gokshura (*Tribulus terrestris*)

Another general approach can be to support the beneficial bacteria in the body while eliminating fungal and bacterial infections that may have arisen.

- Take probiotics and eat probiotic rich foods like vegetable ferments, kombucha, and kefir.
- Take antibacterial herbs:
  - Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*)
  - Garlic (*Allium sativum*)
  - Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*)
- Take antifungal herbs
  - Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)
  - Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*)
  - Bhringaraj (*Eclipta alba*)
  - Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*)
  - Bibhitaki (*Terminalia bellerica*)

## Conclusion

Spring is the perfect time to blossom into health. As the warm weather melts the frost from the ground and the snow from the mountains it also melts away the residues of winter rituals from our body creating a feeling of lightness. If the channels are clogged then increasing light foods, herbs, routines and rituals can be our ticket to a happy and healthy spring. Then, our natural motivation to stay active and be outdoors will feel easy and fluid.

I hope that you find these recommendations supportive on your journey towards more complete health.