

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



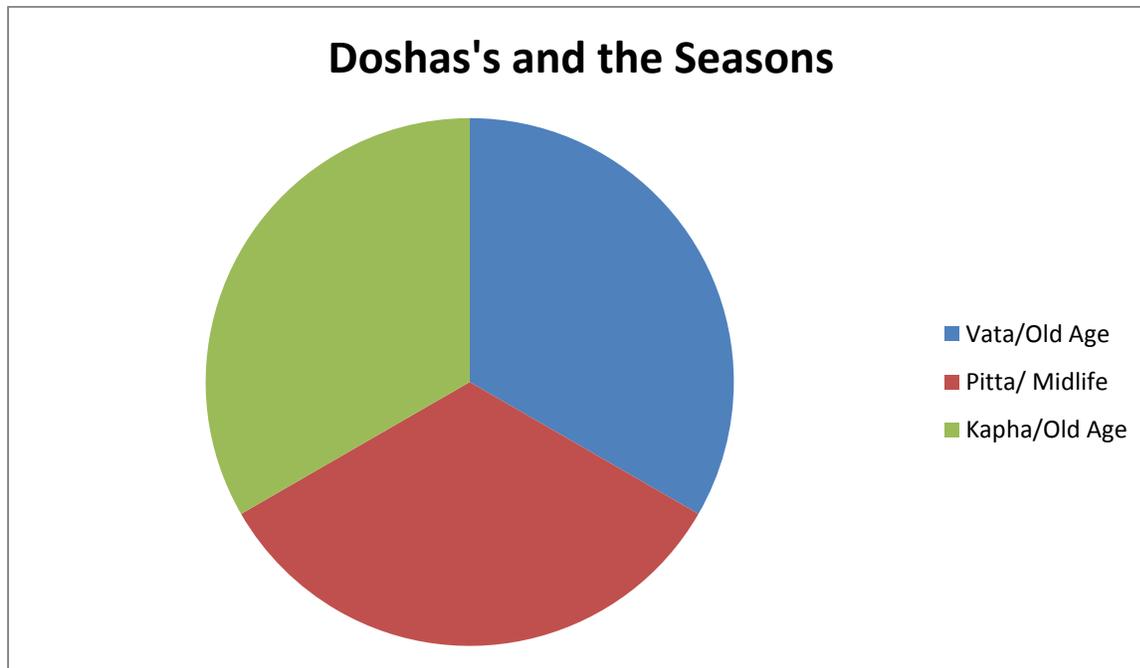
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# Introduction

In the Northern hemisphere spring officially starts on the Spring Equinox March 21<sup>st</sup>. It is when the waters of life cause all of nature to sprout, blossom and bloom. The dark days of winter retire as the youthful energy of spring comes to life. In Ayurveda each season is related to a stage of life and spring is the most youthful season.



Spring is also the Queen of the seasons. She is moist, receptive, devotional and loving. These feminine qualities give her the creativity and persistence to birth new life. These two patterns of activity (creativity and persistence) combine to create a time of sunshine, love and imagination. When the qualities that make up these patterns of activity are refined to their essence the qualities that emerge are warm, moist, gentle, and unctuous. These are also the qualities associated with the *Kapha dosha*. It is the warmth of spring that 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 any of these are the case then use this guide in order keep *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. This 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 which are also governed by *Kapha*. 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 fresh 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 sunflower seeds

## 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) will counterbalance the external heat by lessening the heat within. That's why eating less than you did in the winter will allow you to stay healthy as spring sprouts. The light quality is the key to spring cuisine. Less calories and leaner fat will bring your body and mind in tune with spring's bounty. Here are some suggestions to follow.

## Seasonal Choices

When we used to live off the land the spring provided foods that were predominantly bitter, pungent, and astringent. Foods that mature early in

the year like green beans and other types of beans or astringent foods like legumes such as yellow split peas, red lentils, garbanzos, pinto beans and all others. 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*. Choose crisper fruits that have less water such as apples, pomegranates, and rhubarb in moderation.

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

The hardest part of spring can be weaning yourself off the heavier winter foods that could have been 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 because 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 applied to multiple situations. Seasonal lifestyle recommendations shift us out of the groove created by the dark days of winter and wake us up to the fullness of life. These recommendations can also be employed when *Kapha* is too high leading to lethargy, depression and sluggish digestion.

Lifestyle recommendations for Spring or excessive *Kapha* are:

- Move your body
- House cleaning
- Skip dinner
- Spend time outdoors
- Make a big change
- Eat light, stimulating foods that wake up your appetite
- Reconnect with loved ones

As you emerge from your hibernation it is time to take stock of your life and infuse it with new energy. If you find that you did not downshift during the winter months then these recommendations may not be appropriate for you. If you did do a form a modern hibernation then renew your lust for movement and lightness to energize the body and mind.

# Allergies

Allergies are common in the spring as pollens are released into the air by plants and trees. As substances like pollens come into the body at 25 million Americans over-reacts by producing an excess immune reaction. Mast cells on the skin and in the mucus linings of the nose are home to IgE (immunoglobulin E) an antibody specific to a specific allergen.



When the IgE indicates that an allergen is present the mast cells release a powerful cocktail of histamine, leukotrienes, and prostaglandins, which trigger the one or more of the dosha's to respond with sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, hacking cough, itchy eyes, etc. The dosha's are activated in the hopes of removing the substance/allergen from the body. Thus the approach to allergies is dependent on the qualities of the unique symptoms of the individual and how they relate to the *dosha's*. Hay fever is a type of allergy and will be discussed in detail below. Here are some general recommendations for allergies:

## Vata Type Allergies

The flavor or taste that is most aggravating to *Vata* is the bitter taste. Thus *Vata* type allergies act like consuming too much of the bitter taste. When we eat too much bitter foods 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 more pronounced symptoms indicative of the constrictive quality of the bitter taste such as wheezing, sneezing, ringing in the ears, joint pain, muscle spasms or difficulty falling asleep are possible. *Vata* type allergies do best by avoiding bitter and astringent foods such as beans and leafy greens like dandelion. Since you won't be feeling your best it will be easy to slow down, keep warm and stay hydrated as if you had a cold in order to 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 that causes skin discomfort and can possibly affect the blood. Examples of *pitta* type allergic reactions include red, hot rashes such as hives, allergic dermatitis and eczema which cause itching. Just like too much spicy food *pitta* allergies can lead to heartburn,

acid indigestion, nausea, or vomiting. Rarer are bloodshot eyes and hot flashes caused by *Pitta's* response to the allergen. In this case 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 of *Kapha* allergies is sweet and this type is the most likely because of the excess amount of sweet foods consumed over the winter months. The sweet taste is cold, heavy and moist and it clogs the channels of the sinus passages and respiratory tract leading to symptoms of irritation of the mucus membranes, congestion, cough 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 at this time. 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 as well in order to minimize the exposure to other particulates

in the air that may predispose you towards allergens. Diffusing an essential oil blend like equal parts lemon, lavender and peppermint during the day can be really helpful as well.

### **Take Quercetin and Nettles**

While not a traditional Ayurvedic remedy Quercetin which is 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 more effective in this regard and the fresher 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.

Honey and bee pollen can be another strategy to acclimate the body to different pollens so that it does not respond 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 and this is usually linked to high levels of stress. That is why mounting a more efficient response to stress levels in a healthy way can be useful in improved allergy recovery times or reductions in symptoms. Stress resilience can be improved through the following strategies:

- Meditation

- Yoga
- Taking baths

It only takes 10-15 minutes a day of stress resilience activities can have a profound impact on 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 against the adverse effects of high pollen counts and excess congestion characteristic of the spring. Like the stress resilience measures 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. Take an inhale and feel the breath move from the base of the spine up towards the collarbones. Exhale and feel the breath moving from the collarbones down the front of the spine to the base. Do this for 5 breaths or 5 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 daily moving. 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 to create 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 will be critical and supportive for your

individual case. An Ayurvedic practitioner can help you become more aware in your situation and to understand the many factors at play in your imbalance so that you may choose a strategy that will help heal the root of your particular imbalances.

## Hay Fever



A common spring hypersensitivity reaction is hay fever. At this time of year tree, grass or weed pollens as well as 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 used to destroy the pollen. In hay fever 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 or chronic symptoms and an enhanced sensitivity to smells, color, light and sound.

### Too Much *Kapha*

Like most spring complaints *kapha* is to blame. 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 the increase in *kapha*. When the weather warms the icy layers of *kapha* melt and flood the channels of the body with fluids. The rush of watery like fluids into 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 and many of them 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, but aspects of the 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 is the digestive weakness from excess *kapha* leading to low quality mucosa and so this approach only provides symptomatic relief.
  - Anti-inflammatory herbs in general or those with a specific action on the mucosa and respiratory system are useful. These include:
    - Nettles (*Urtica dioica*)
    - Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*)
    - Kutki (*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 so it is best to eliminate mucus producing foods such as dairy and flour and to treat leaky-gut if it is present. This can be achieved by not overeating, not eating after 7pm, avoiding alcohol and fried foods.
  - Digestive Stimulants help to remove stagnation and improve spleen and liver function.
    - Kutki (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*)
    - Kalmegh (*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 the deranged mucosal lining of the lungs must be remedied.

- Respiratory tonics and demulcents
  - 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
  - Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)
  - Amalaki (*Embllica 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 not only 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 use cilia to move mucus out of the nose. As the mucus stagnates from lack of movement it becomes a breeding ground for bacterial and fungal infections.

## A condition with many colors

Sinusitis can be 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. The 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 help 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 you can do nasya 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. By decongesting the lymph and loosening and clearing mucus *kapha* symptoms can be relieved with the following herbs.

- Manjishta (*Rubia cordifolia*)
- Ginger (*Zingiber*)
- Pippali (*Piper longum*)
- Cardamon (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
- Elecampagne (*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.

- Eat probiotic rich foods like vegetable ferments, kombucha, kefir and take probiotics.
- Antibacterial
  - Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*)
  - Garlic (*Allium sativum*)
  - Guggulu (*Commiphora mukul*)
- Antifungals
  - 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 tending to the garden of our mind and body will feel easy and fluid. I hope that you find this

recommendations supportive on your journey towards more complete health.