Allergy Sufferers Beware This Spring

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The change of seasons, especially spring, can be a miserable time for many. It's the allergy time of year. Noses itch and run, eyes are watery, puffy and lined with dark circles. Many people wheeze, sneeze and cough, feeling unusually fatigued. With no shame, anything will serve as a kleenex.

We blame it on the pollen - the tiny, powdery granules released by the plants for fertilization. These pollen granules, transported by the wind, then enter the nose and throat. The body's immune response to a foreign invader, such as when it raises a fever to kill a virus, is normal. When we have a powerful response to a whiff of air containing pollen, it is evidence of an immune system or liver function that is impaired.

Whereas the tendency is to pop anti-histamines to control the symptoms of the allergic response, the better choice is to strengthen the immune and detoxifying systems of the body

Our body's first line of defense is the mucosal lining of the respiratory and digestive tract. The job of this lining is to shield the body from inhaled substances such as pollen, dust, dander and molds.

The respiratory tract's involvement makes sense to us. What many don't realize is that although we inhale the foreign substance, pollen and dust particles are trapped and enter the stomach with the production of saliva and mucus which is then swallowed. The mucosal lining of the digestive tract is also intimately involved in the immune response to what we have inhaled.

The integrity of this mucosal lining is critical. Some of the big players in the health of the lining are the adrenal glands, our food choices as well as the taking of antibiotics.

The adrenal glands produce the hormone cortisol needed for healthy mucosal function. If the adrenals are exhausted they cannot produce this much needed hormone. How to know if your adrenal glands are compromised? Signs of adrenal fatigue are the need for caffeine and sugar to keep going, inability to sleep well, blood sugar imbalance, ligament weakness, fatigue, allergies, and the craving of salt. I spend a great deal of my time with my clients addressing the health of their adrenal glands.

Eating foods that the body cannot digest well or it is intolerant of also wears on the mucosal lining. Typical offenders are wheat and cow dairy. The elimination of gluten containing foods (wheat) is a big first step in healing the mucosal lining. Cow dairy, especially that which is pasteurized, challenges the body's digestive

tract. It also creates plenty of mucous. Eliminating cow dairy can significantly reduce excess mucous production.

Antibiotics also hamper the integrity of the gut lining. A study from the University of Michigan in 2004 links the use of antibiotics to the increase of allergies and asthma over the last 40 years. To read about the study, go to scienceblog.com, “Antibiotics alter GI tract microbes, increase sensitivity to allergens”.

Breast feeding sets the stage for a healthy immune function and healthy gut lining. Whether one was breastfed or not plays a role in the allergy response later in life.

When I am dealing with spring allergies I address the foundations first. I attend to my client’s digestive tract and their adrenal health. I also address the functioning of their liver and gallbladder (or lack thereof) which helps the body detoxify the foreign particles and the histamines created from the allergic response.

Also important is the need for essential fatty acids in the diet. These EFA’s reduce both the allergic and the inflammatory response while soothing irritated mucous membranes. One tablespoon of a good quality flax or fish oil added to the diet per day helps increase anti-inflammatory fats in the body.

The time to make these changes (although there’s no time like the present) is prior to the allergy season. This gives your body time to repair dysfunctional systems and strengthen itself for upcoming assaults. Call me if you need some assistance in handling this spring or preparing yourself for the next.