

FOODSENSE

Allergies and how to avoid them

Nutritional therapist Beata Rachowiecka has worked in many private clinics in and around London, including Harley Street, written for local publications and lectured to a variety of interest groups and organisations as well as running her private practice Focus Nutrition + based in Berkshire, website: (www.focusnutritionplus.co.uk), tel: 01753 814228.

MAY IS a glorious month but airborne allergies are rampant at this time of the year and the many possible triggers out there make it very confusing when it comes to identifying what is causing the symptoms.

The blood tests covering the plethora of allergens, from animal dander to tree and flower pollen, may be inconclusive. Moreover, food and contact allergies may be playing a part too, though the symptoms of these are not always limited to this time of the year.

Reactions to environmental triggers can show as a rash, cough, itchiness of skin or eyes, runny nose, wheezing, bloating, diarrhoea or constipation, racing heart or low mood. But not all that looks like an allergy is an allergy: if the onset of symptoms is immediate, it usually is but when reaction is delayed, it is usually intolerance. The

picture is made even more complex by some triggers mimicking others on a molecular level (for example, as grain and dairy foods can do), overlapping reactions or irritation stemming from excess histamine due to high intake of foods containing this chemical and not involving the immune system.

Our oral tolerance can decrease with age, a repetitive, nutrient-depleted diet and chronic or even low-level stress exposure – this is why eating the best selection of varied, organic foods is always the best starting point. Managing pressure with relaxation and exercise is a bonus.

So how can you reduce the fallout from any known allergies? The answer is two-fold: firstly, limiting exposure to what is known or suspected to have triggered a reaction in the past and, secondly, strengthening the immune system. Whilst

avoiding, rotating or significantly reducing ingestion of the foods known to be a problem is easier, with inhalant allergies the trick lies in enhancing the immune system and its 'barrier' function.

Critical nutrients for maximising your resistance are vitamins A, C and D, zinc, and flavonoids. Ensuring that such foods as pumpkin seeds, carrots, sauerkraut, blackberries, kiwis, all colourful vegetables, eggs and butter are part of your daily intake (provided you are not allergic to them!) can prove useful.

Maintaining good bowel flora with probiotic yoghurt, kefir or sauerkraut is also helpful, and on the immune front nothing beats maximising vitamin D levels via sensible sun exposure – the single, most effective solution to the widespread explosion of allergies in the population at large.

Yoga class

Gail Willis continues her series of simple hatha yoga moves

YOGA INSTRUCTOR Gail Willis has recruited her mother Janet Rogers to help demonstrate yoga exercises in *Choice* every month.

In each picture Janet, who is 78, illustrates the basic position for each exercise – the easiest one for the beginner. Gail illustrates the maximum position for each exercise.

You should start following Janet's position and try to increase gradually towards Gail's advanced level.

"Only build up to a level that you are comfortable with," says Gail, who is a full-time yoga instructor in Kettering. "With some exercises you will be able to do the maximum level

of stretch, but with others you will achieve only the basic move. It doesn't matter – even the easiest will be good for you and make you feel good."

Find out more

■ To contact Gail, tel: 01536 515311, mobile: 07762 575118
 ■ To find a yoga class where you live, ask at your local library, county council offices, tourist information centre, sports centre, a local school or anywhere that runs evening classes.

Yoga for digestive difficulties - The Mountain

Sit on the floor with your legs in a V shape, sit against a wall or sofa if it is more comfortable. If you cannot sit on the floor, carry this yoga pose out sitting in a chair.

Press your palms together into a prayer position like Janet. Breathing slowly, take your arms up as if trying to touch the ceiling like Gail. Try not to let your back slouch. You can look up or forward depending on your neck. Hold for five to 20 seconds breathing the whole time.

Lower to start position like Janet and repeat.



Next month:
Diagonal Shoulder Lift