

5 Tips For Hay Fever

As longer days, lighter evenings and the warmth of spring and summer sunshine begin, this can also mean the onset of dreaded hay fever season.

How does the Immune System react to Hay Fever?

In hay fever sufferers the immune system is over-stimulated, perceiving pollen as a foreign invader, causing an inflammatory response and the release of histamine.

The gut mucosal barrier houses approximately 70% of the body's immune cells, and is lined and influenced by a diverse microflora that plays an important role in the development and function of the corresponding immune system. Imbalanced microflora has been observed in those suffering allergic diseases. It is not surprising, therefore, that there appears to be a link between the severity of such allergies and the health of our gut.

Live probiotic products could benefit hay fever sufferers by modulating the immune system and controlling pathogenic overgrowth.

A study in 2014 reported that hay fever sufferers given a lactobacilli probiotic for 5 weeks saw significant improvement in quality of life, in particular a reduction in runny eyes. Results of those taking the probiotic alongside anti-histamines were more significant than those taking an antihistamine alone.

Another study in 2011 found that subjects with hay fever, who consumed a lactobacilli probiotic had lower nasal congestion and itching. They also produced less inflammatory markers and a reduced immune response.

It has been shown that the microflora is more diverse in the nasal passages of allergy sufferers. This can lead to predominance in pathogenic bacteria and a reduction in protective flora, therefore reducing immune defense. Although it is not well understood how probiotics have an effect on nasal microflora, some studies have shown benefits. A study testing the effect of probiotics on potential pathogenic bacteria (PPB) in the nose found a significant reduction in nasal PPBs in those who consumed probiotics.

It could be said that it is the balancing of the whole gut ecology with a wide mix of microbes over the long term that is of greater benefit than the presence of one individual strain. Here are some top tips for allergy management and hay fever symptoms this season:

1. Probiotics, such as Lactobacilli, have shown some promising results in improving runny eyes, blocked nose, nasal itching, and inflammation in less than 5 weeks.
2. Traditionally it would have been recommended to consume locally made honey from bees that have pollinated local plants, supposedly building up a tolerance to local plant antigens.

3. Eating a rainbow of different colored vegetables and salads should provide you with a wide range of immune supporting nutrients and antioxidants such as vitamin A, C and E, zinc and selenium.
4. Cooking with natural flavors of onions, garlic, cayenne pepper, ginger and turmeric and consuming omega 3 fatty acids found in oily fish, nuts, seeds and oils, are said to contain natural anti-inflammatory compounds.
5. Drink plenty of water - it is thought that histamine is naturally produced when we are dehydrated.

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