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Natural Help for Allergies

It's that time of year again – allergy season! I'm starting to hear the sniffing and sneezing everywhere around town - it's amazing that particles as tiny as pollen can cause so much misery!

Many clients in my Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Acupuncture practice complain about the itchy eyes, sinus congestion, foggy head and other symptoms of allergies that are so common this time of year. Anti-histamines can help with the symptoms, but many seek a more holistic and longer-term solution.

TCM has a different way of looking at immunity than western medicine. In this ancient system, it is the *wei qi* that shields us from outside influences. This layer of porous protective energy runs just below the skin and is an aspect of the Lung organ system. It moderates what gets into the body, and what gets released. I think of it as a gatekeeper. If the gates are stuck open, too much gets in, and we may be affected by frequent colds and flus, allergies, or, on an emotional level, be overly sensitive to others' energy, taking on their negative emotions.

Chinese Medicine can firm up and balance the body's protective energy to increase our immunity and decrease allergic reactions. One of the common formulas I prescribe to strengthen *wei qi* is called "Jade Windscreen". Using Astragalus and other herbs, it creates a strong screen to keep outside influences out. This formula is used not only for allergies, but also to boost immunity to prepare for cold and flu season.

In my practice, I have found Acupuncture and Chinese herbs particularly effective in treating sinus issues: congestion, pressure, sinus headaches, or chronic infection. Acupuncture and herbs help to open and drain the passages, while at the same time increasing the body's defences, strengthening the system, and reducing reactivity to allergens. Clients have reported that sinus headaches are reduced and they can breathe freely out of their nose for the first time in a long time!

Because the *wei qi* is connected to the Lung, issues in that system are addressed at the same time as strengthening immunity. Chronic cough, bronchitis, asthma, shortness of breath, and skin issues such as eczema are all indications of imbalance in the Lung system and can be addressed by TCM. On an emotional level, the Lung is associated with taking in and letting go (think breathing!) Chronic grief and sadness are indications of blockage in this system and move through naturally when the Lung energy is balanced.

Many of my clients have reported that Chinese Medicine has not only decreased their allergy symptoms, but also that they have more energy, feel lighter, happier and better all-round. This is because everything is connected in TCM, and when we treat one aspect of the body, everything is affected. Many are surprised that even their outlook on life is more positive and their relationships improve. Everyone benefits.

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