

April 2009 Newsletter



Here is Miles holding a nifty Sinus Rinse bottle. One of our ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat physician) colleagues was heard to joke: "If everyone used Sinus Rinse, I might be out of business."

Seasonal allergies

This month we are focusing on the subject of natural therapies for seasonal allergies. Even if you have never experienced allergy symptoms, don't stop reading – the eating tips on the other side of the page are still a sensible approach, and the *Hot Stuff* on the next page is delicious with meatloaf. The recipe is from *Good Food, Great Medicine*, the book written by Miles and his sister Mea. Check it out for more recipes to boost your immune system and keep your sinuses running in the right direction.

Many people find that using natural remedies may reduce the need for medications (therefore reducing side effects.) For details on conventional treatments, please refer to the May 2008 newsletter, available on our web site at www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

Natural therapies for allergy relief

Start with daily exercise: Even if only for a short duration, daily exercise seems to reduce allergy symptoms for some.

Use nasal saline daily: This helps keep the mucous layer in the nose healthy and minimizes the accumulation of material in the nasal passages. Two over-the-counter products that

work together to achieve this are nasal saline spray and sinus rinse. Use both for best results.

1. **Nasal saline spray:** (Ayr spray, Ocean Spray, and others). Use 2-4 times daily.
2. **Nasal saline rinse, used daily:** The most successful option seems to be the simple and inexpensive **NeilMed Sinus Rinse kit** (see photo above), available at most pharmacies and www.neilmed.com. You can also mix a simple salt solution at home and use a little device called a *neti pot*. There is even a very effective nasal irrigator that you can attach to a Water Pik.

Eat well: The Mediterranean-style diet which we recommend also seems to reduce allergies. One dietary component that may be particularly important to avoid are hydrogenated oils. Remember to read ingredient labels!

■ **Avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates.**

(Like white flour products.) This should *always* be the first step when treating immune modulation problems like allergies. Reducing sugar helps to improve immune response.

■ **Eating yogurt and kefir may be beneficial.**

Reducing milk intake can be helpful, but *cultured* milk products like yogurt and kefir are usually tolerated and can reduce allergy symptoms and boost immunity. When using yogurt and kefir buy brands without sweetening or other additives, then flavor to taste at home (with fresh fruit and honey, for example.)

■ **Try local bee pollen.** See if it helps to take ½ teaspoon daily for a month. Bee pollen varies in appearance and flavor; the granules are usually golden-brown, with a pleasantly bittersweet taste. Our favorite way to eat bee pollen is sprinkled on muesli or granola, but eating it straight works fine. Bee pollen may help by desensitizing the system to some of the pollens to which we might be allergic: therefore, make an effort to find locally collected pollen. (We found some recently at New Seasons Market.)

■ **Eat horseradish and hot chili peppers.**

These are longstanding folk remedies that many find helpful. Use every day for a week or two and see if there is an effect. Horseradish comes in many forms, but try to find a brand as pure and hot as possible – hot enough to make your eyes water when you take off the lid and sniff. (It's delicious with grilled steak or roast beef, by the way.) Drinking a glass of water laced with ¼ teaspoon of something like Tabasco can help.

Hot stuff

This should be hot. If it isn't hot enough to make you exclaim when you taste it, hot it up some more. Horseradish (as well as mustard) is an effective decongestant, and a sensible diet supplement for anyone with chronic congestion and a handy box of Kleenex. Try this sauce with meat loaf or an aggressive vegetable like Brussels sprouts. (You may even forget you never liked Brussels sprouts.)

2 tablespoons Coleman's dry mustard
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons extra-hot horseradish
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon honey
½ cup Best Foods mayonnaise
½ cup *drained* plain Nancy's yogurt (whole or low-fat)

- Combine the first five ingredients in a small mixing bowl, and whisk until honey is dissolved. Add mayonnaise and drained yogurt and blend until smooth. This will hold nicely in the refrigerator for weeks. *Makes about 1½ cups.*

To drain yogurt:

- Place 1 cup plain yogurt in a yogurt strainer, or a sieve lined with a disposable basket-style coffee filter. (A paper towel also works well.) Drain the yogurt in the refrigerator overnight, covered with plastic wrap.

Some allergy supplements:

■ **Butterbur:** *Standardized herbal extract with 8mg petasin per tablet 4 times daily* was as effective as a conventional antihistamine in one study.¹ We also use butterbur to treat migraines.

■ **Freeze Dried Nettles:** *Standardized extract 300mg daily* has experimental data confirming benefit. This tends to sell out of natural food stores in the spring, so get it early if you want to try it out.

■ **Vitamin E:** *800 IU daily* can be effective for reducing nasal symptoms. We don't recommend the use of high dose vitamin E year-round because of concerns over its safety when used over long periods of time.

■ **Other Supplements:** There are other supplements that are used occasionally with good effect, such as *bromelain* and *quercetin*. Dose and quality vary widely, and we would be glad to advise you further.

Cookbook update

The second printing of the second edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine* is now available. This new edition is about 30% larger than the first and has a new chapter, *Preventing Heart Disease and Heart Attacks*, built around a comprehensive 10-step plan that combines food, exercise, lifestyle, nutritional supplements, and medication decisions to prevent, treat – and potentially reverse – heart disease. There are also about a dozen new recipes and an expanded index. Books are available in our office or on-line at www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com.

Upcoming Speaking Events

4/6 and 4/7/2009– Providence Cardiovascular Symposium: Miles Hassell, MD: *The Lifestyle Prescription for Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease: Which Choices Really Matter?* Portland, Oregon.

4/7/2009– NEXT Steps Against Breast Cancer: Miles Hassell, MD and Ken Weizer, ND: *Nutrition and Exercise Today to Reduce Risk and Improve Survival.* For more info, call Prov Resource Line (503) 574-6595.

5/23/2009– 37th Annual Physician Assistant Conference: Miles Hassell, MD: *Ischemic Heart Disease: Are Diet and Exercise More Powerful Than Drugs?* San Diego, California.

5/27/2009– Providence Fitness and Wellness Services Staff Talk: Miles Hassell, MD: *Exercise and Cancer.* Portland, Oregon.

5/31/2009– Oregon Cardiovascular Symposium: Miles Hassell, MD: *Treating and Preventing Ischemic Heart Disease: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Improve Outcomes?* Portland, Oregon.

¹ Schapowal, A. BMJ 2002;324:144-46