

## May 2008 Newsletter

### Non-Drug Approaches for Seasonal Allergies

While conventional therapies such as nasal steroid sprays, decongestants, and topical or oral antihistamines can be helpful, they are not adequate for some patients and their side effects are sometimes troublesome. Some side effects may include:

- 'Rebound' worsening of symptoms, and irritation in the nose (from nasal decongestants such as Afrin)
- Palpitations or other evidence of heart arrhythmias, and high blood pressure (from oral decongestants such as Sudafed)
- Nose irritation, and a remote chance of increasing glaucoma risk (from nasal steroids)
- Drowsiness (from oral antihistamines and any of the medications already mentioned, although this is seen less in the 'non-sedating' antihistamines)

Because of these issues, we are always on the lookout for treatments that reduce the need for conventional medicines. Typically patients will do the things mentioned below, and then use their conventional medicines for *rescue*.

### Nasal Saline

This helps keep the mucous layer in the nose healthy, and minimizes the accumulation of material in the nasal passages. Two products that work together to achieve this are:

- Nasal saline spray (Ayr spray, Ocean Spray, and others). *Use 2-4 times daily.*
- Nasal saline rinse. This can be done a number of ways including mixing a simple salt solution at home and using a little device called a *neti pot*. There is even a very effective gadget that you can attach to a Water Pik. An easy and inexpensive approach is to buy a kit called *Sinus Rinse*, available at most pharmacies.

### Eating Tips:

- **Reduce Sugar and Refined Carbohydrates:** This may reduce symptoms by improving immune response.
- **Reduce Dairy Intake** for a week and see if it helps. For example, skip drinking milk as a beverage. Cultured milk products like unsweetened yogurt may be tolerated by some, but any dairy foods can be troublesome for others.

- **Local Bee Pollen** is sometimes available from natural food stores: we just picked some up from the New Seasons on Cedar Hills Boulevard. Local bee pollen, as against the more commonly available bee pollens brought in from other regions, presumably includes some of the pollens to which you might be allergic and seems to work for some people, perhaps by desensitizing the individual. It is worth taking ½ -1 teaspoon daily for a month and see if there is a difference.
- **Use Horseradish, Wasabi and Hot Peppers:** *Horseradish* and *wasabi* are longstanding folk remedies that many find helpful (and enjoyable with a piece of beef or sushi). Use every day for a week or two and see if there is an effect. *Hot chili peppers* can also be helpful; some find relief in a glass of water with small amounts of Tabasco or hot sauce of choice added.

### Featured Allergy Recipe

Take a look at the following *Good Food Great Medicine* recipe if you are trying to incorporate *Horseradish* in your diet to combat allergies.

#### 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 is a noble decongestant, as is mustard, 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 yogurt (not non-fat)

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

#### Note:

- It is worth going to some trouble to track down an honest, vicious horseradish. Enquire at a food store you can trust.

## To Drain Yogurt

- Place 1 cup yogurt in a yogurt strainer, or a sieve lined with a disposable basket-style coffee filter. (A paper towel also works perfectly well.)
- Drain the yogurt in the refrigerator overnight, covered with plastic wrap. You will end up with about ½ cup of drained yogurt.

### Note:

Additives like gelatin and cornstarch will inhibit draining so read ingredient labels. We like Nancy's yogurt, which is available in many supermarkets. Whole milk yogurt is best in this recipe, but low fat is just fine.

- Please don't "discard liquid", as most recipes direct. If it's good enough to eat when it's an integral part of the yogurt, it's good enough to drink after it is extracted. It's cold and refreshing. If you don't want to drink it, add it to soup or a smoothie.

## Supplements for Seasonal Allergies:

- **Vitamin E:** 800 IU daily can be effective for reducing nasal symptoms but probably won't do much for the eye symptoms.<sup>1</sup> We don't recommend routine use of high dose vitamin E year-round unless there is persistent benefit, however.
- **Butterbur:** Standardized herbal extract with 8mg petasin per tablet 4 times daily was as effective as a conventional antihistamine in one study.<sup>2</sup> We also use butterbur to reduce incidence of migraine.
- **Freeze Dried Nettles:** Standardized extract 300mg daily have 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.
- **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.

## New Website Under Construction

Our new website is under construction. Stay tuned for more details.

## Finally

Whether or not you are experiencing seasonal allergies or any other slings and arrows of life, don't forget your daily dose of good food, brisk exercise, fresh air, and adequate sleep. Potent medicine indeed, and we guarantee that you will love the side effects!

## Miles and Anna Hassell



As you may have picked up from the clues contained in the above picture, after 50 years of being single, Miles found someone who tolerates him! Dr. Hassell married Anna Blomgren on March 29, at her family home on Vashon Island, near Seattle. Anna is a linguist who has most recently been working with a Christian organization in Israel. All of us agree that if anyone could have written a prescription for the ideal woman for Miles, it would describe Anna.

## Upcoming Speaking Events

**5/19/2008 – Cardiology Grand Rounds:** Miles Hassell, MD. SW Washington Medical Center.

**5/28/2008 – Medical Resident Lecture:** Miles Hassell, MD: *Ischemic Heart Disease*. Providence Milwaukie Hospital.

**6/6/2008 – Grand Rounds:** Miles Hassell, MD and Ken Weizer, ND. National College of Natural Medicine.

**May/June 2008 – Lifestyle Change Class:** Miles Hassell, MD and Angela Hahn, MD. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center.

**6/13-15/2008 – Cardiac Conference:** Miles Hassell, MD: *Statins in Women*, and *How Should We Live?* Mea Hassell: *Cooking Demonstration*. Leavenworth, Washington.

**9/18/2008 – Providence Cancer Center Integrative Medicine Program:** Miles Hassell, MD and Cindy Reuter, ND, MSOM, L.Ac., RD: *Making Your Way Through the Supplement Jungle: Vitamins, Minerals and Herbs* Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. (This talk is open to the public and free. To register, call the Providence Resource Line @ (503)574-6595)

<sup>1</sup> Sahir. *Annals of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology* 2004;92:654-58

<sup>2</sup> Schapowal, A. *BMJ* 2002;324:144-46