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## 10 All-Natural Allergy Remedies

Ease seasonal sniffing and sneezing with these time-tested methods

By Barbara Brody



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Special Offer

Your allergies are driving you crazy, but you really don't like to take conventional medications. Or maybe you've tried over-the-counter allergy meds—or even prescription ones—but you're not getting the relief you need. What else might work? Consider these alternative options:

### 1. Saline Nasal Rinse

This is one remedy that both Eastern and Western docs (like your allergist) will likely agree on. Basically all you're doing is flushing out



your sinuses with a saltwater solution, which can help wash away allergens and irritants. To do it, grab a Neti Pot or a large squeeze bottle, like the one made by NeilMed, and fill it with a premixed packet of saline solution (available at drugstores) or make your own solution. To mix it yourself, combine 1 quart of distilled or boiled (then cooled) water; 2 to 3 tsp non-iodized salt (kosher, pickling, canning or sea salt); and 1 tsp baking soda. Put about 8 oz at a time in the Neti Pot or squeeze bottle and tilt

your head forward over the sink while you pour/squeeze the solution in one nostril and let it drain out the other. "I tell patients to pant like a puppy, which lifts the palate and closes off the back of the nose so you don't get that drowning sensation," says Sezelle Gereau Haddon, MD, an attending otolaryngologist at the Beth Israel Medical Center Department of Integrative Medicine in New York City.



### 2. Cool-Mist Humidifier

You might be tempted to pack up the humidifier, but hold off, recommends John Salerno, DO, a family practitioner at Patients Medical holistic wellness center in New York City. "When it's still a

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little cool at night and indoor humidity is low, using a cool-mist humidifier can help get allergens out of the air," he explains. "Water droplets bind to the allergens, and they get heavy and fall to the floor so you don't inhale them."



### 3. Air Purifier with a HEPA Filter

Using a HEPA filter—especially in the bedroom—is the best way to remove spores and pollen from the air, says Dr. Salerno. Not sure which brand to buy? He likes [Austin Air](#), but also suggests checking out the latest air purifier reviews from [Consumer Reports](#).

### 4. Steam Inhalation

Congested? Dr. Haddon suggests inhaling the steam of essential oils (available at health food stores). She shared this "recipe," which was given to her by Dale Bellisfeld, RN, AHG: Fill a saucepan with water and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat, take the pan off the stovetop and add 3 drops eucalyptus essential oil, 3 drops rosemary essential oil, 2 drops myrtle essential oil and 2 drops tea tree essential oil. Tent a bath towel over the saucepan (keep your face just far enough away from the steam to avoid burns) and inhale deeply for 5 to 10 minutes. Repeat 1 to 3 times a day.



### 5. Probiotics

You probably associate probiotics—a.k.a. "good" bacteria, like that found in plain yogurt—with digestion, but they also play a role in keeping your immune system well balanced. Since not all strains of probiotics are beneficial for the same thing, Dr. Haddon recommends choosing brands that contain *Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG*, *Bifidobacterium lactis* and *Acidophilus*. She likes Pro-5 by

[Klaire Labs](#).

### 6. Honey

Dr. Haddon admits there isn't as much science behind this one, but there are no side effects, either. Many of her patients swear that eating local honey (produced near where they live) really works. "The bees eat the pollen that's in your region of the country, then they produce the honey and you consume that, so it's kind of like a mini allergy shot," she says.



### 7. Quercetin

This substance, which is found in the skin of onions and apples, is a natural antihistamine, says Lynne David, ND, a naturopathic doctor and Chinese medicine practitioner at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, DC. You can take it by itself (300 mg 3 times a day during peak allergy season without food), or in a combination

product like [NOW](#), which also includes bromelain (from pineapple; also beneficial for allergies). Dr. Salerno recommends a similar combo product, [Aller-C](#), which contains quercetin, bromelain and

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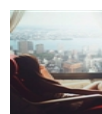


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vitamin C. And Dr. Haddon likes **Natural D-Hist**, which contains quercetin, stinging nettle leaf, bromelain and N-Acetyl L-Cysteine (an amino acid that helps thin mucus). All these supplements are relatively safe, but check with your doctor first to make sure they don't interact with other medications you're taking (antidepressants and thyroid meds in particular may cause a problem).



### 8. Stinging Nettle Leaf

This herb, found in many of the combo allergy products noted above, can also be taken by itself in tea form, says Dr. Haddon. To make sure you get enough of the medicinal oils, pour boiling water over the tea bag and cover the cup for 15 minutes to let the oils seep in before drinking.



### 9. Homeopathic Treatments

Homeopathy uses very diluted amounts of herb and flower essences. Dr. David recommends two homeopathic remedies (taken orally; you let the tiny tablets dissolve under your tongue) for allergies: *Euphrasia*, which is especially good for burning, itchy eyes; and *Allium cepa*, which is good for a drippy nose. She suggests trying one at a time (rather than

together) to see which one might work for you.



### 10. Acupuncture

Although it's not exactly clear why, acupuncture may help alleviate allergy symptoms—especially if you start treatment about a month before peak season. Dr. Salerno says it's possible that stimulating some of the meridians (channels through which energy flows) may help to temper an overactive immune system that can lead to bad allergy symptoms.



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