

Allergies, asthma, anxiety;

'Tis the season for hayfever and it many are suffering.

Hayfever can present with many and varied symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, runny nose/blocked nose, itchy eyes, post nasal drip. It can include weeping, streaming eyes with not quite conjunctivitis in the morning but close to, or the upper palate maybe incredibly itchy.

Fatigue often accompanies these debilitating symptoms and with it, irritability which is understandable after the tenth or more sneeze or a nose that won't work. Before you reach for those OTC's - those 'over the counter' medications and sprays you might consider some alternatives.

Most medications for hayfever are based on an antihistamine, these can make you drowsy and indeed many advise not to operate or drive a vehicle, which makes getting to work a tad difficult. It can also make it difficult to stay awake let alone function coherently at work. Other medications may "dry you up" which is not such a clever idea when you realize that the mucous is serving a purpose albeit in a quantity much greater than it should be. Basically what is happening here is an inflammatory response to pollen which causes specific cells to release histamine resulting in copious quantities of mucous. In a healthy person with correct breathing ie minimally through the nose then the mucous secreted simply provides a protective film lying over the cilia (fine hairs) lining the mucous membranes. One needs no tissues or hankies, no throat or nose clearing, no post nasal drip down the back of the throat, but if breathing is elevated which it is when the body is stressed then the mucous membranes of the airways need extra protection.

If your breathing is normally quiet, gentle and nasal, day, night and during moderate exercise and you simply have seasonal hayfever then there are some very effective alternatives to the conventional sprays and pills. Herbs will help and not all of them taste ghastly which I might add is a very small price to trade for the debilitating symptoms. Homeopathic remedies can work miracles. If you find that the OTC homeopathic sprays don't work, don't give up too quickly, homeopathy works by matching the symptoms and person picture to a remedy so you might need expert help or at least a good reference book.

If on the other hand your breathing is not quiet, gentle and nasal, if you need to open your mouth frequently or worse, all the time, in order to breathe then your hayfever is an extension of poor breathing habits. This is chronic over breathing, or hyperventilation. Hayfever and sinusitis, which is essentially infection in the sinuses causing considerable pain and/or headaches, are a major stress on the body and as such will increase the breathing even further. This can result in an exacerbation of asthma symptoms or an asthma attack and is this is often termed seasonal

asthma. The increased breathing could worsen the insomniac's sleepless night, or lead to a particularly bad night snoring, possibly to the point of several apnoeic episodes. This could lead a person down the nightmare path of sleep apnoea requiring mechanical assistance to sleep when all that is needed is a correction to the breathing.

Finally increased breathing can cause feelings of anxiety and if unchecked or severe enough might result in a panic attack. This too is a very debilitating condition.

If you simply have seasonal hayfever and no underlying breathing issues then do try a herbal tonic or a homeopathic remedy, but, if your hayfever/sinus is accompanied with other conditions like asthma, a chronic or persistent cough, anxiety or insomnia, snoring or apnoea, then the obvious "remedy" is to correct the dysfunctional breathing through Buteyko breathing training, and learn to breathe quietly, gently and nasally all the time.