



Does springtime in the air send you running for cover? You could be one of 36 million Americans with allergic rhinitis — hay fever. And if you're like 74 percent of your sniffing, itchy-eyed compadres, antihistamines and prescription meds give you a nose drier than the Gobi desert and a brain too fuzzy to operate heavy machinery like your laptop. Studies show that alternative treatments can be just as effective, without the uncomfortable side effects.

Try Sublingual Immunotherapy

How it works Sometimes the best cure is the thing that ails you. That's the concept behind these under-the-tongue, prescription-only drops, which are extracts of plants you're allergic to. In 6 weeks,

sublingual immunotherapy can decrease the amount of traditional meds needed by up to 42 percent.

Rx You take the drops daily for 3 to 5 years, about the same as allergy shots. But the drops are self-administered, which saves you dozens of doctor visits (and cash). Visit allergychoices.com to find a prescribing allergist or immunologist.

Try Stinging Nettle

How it works Stinging nettle contains histamine, the chemical your body makes during an allergic reaction, so it helps you acquire tolerance. In a study by the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, nettle significantly improved symptoms for 64 percent of patients.

Rx Two capsules every 3 to 4 hours during allergy season. Try Eclectic Institute's Fresh Freeze-Dried Stinging Nettle (\$7.50 for 90 capsules, Vitacost.com).

Try Local Honey

If you get heartburn 2 or more times a week, despite treatment and change in diet, you may have acid reflux disease

purplepill.com

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How it works Honey contains pollen, so eating it helps your body acclimate (the tolerance concept again). Plus, "honey straight from the hive contains enzymes that reduce inflammation and antibiotic properties that stimulate your immune system," says John Heinerman, Ph.D., a medical anthropologist.

Rx Sweeten tea with locally grown honey or chew honeycomb (\$5 per pound, **Whole Foods Market**).

Try Acupuncture

How it works Applying needles to the body strengthens the immune system, says Kathy Bishop, M.D., an anesthesiologist and acupuncturist in Casa Grande, Arizona. A study by Charlie Xue, Ph.D., of the World Health Organization, found that about a dozen half-hour acupuncture sessions relieved allergy symptoms for more than 60 percent of patients.

Rx One or two sessions per week for 6 to 8 weeks during allergy season. Cost: \$50 to \$150 per session. To find an acupuncturist, see **NCCAOM**. For a doctor who practices acupuncture, see **American Academy of Medical Acupuncture**.

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