

HEALTH

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TCM

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Winter woes

For many people, winter means respiratory trouble. Nasal itching, constant sneezing, a runny nose and watery, itchy eyes may develop within minutes after breathing in allergens.

Instead of avoiding the allergic triggers or simply seeking symptomatic relief, traditional Chinese treatment of allergic rhinitis focuses on the internal weakness that causes the allergy.

In TCM understanding, lungs open into the nose, and nasal function mainly depends on the action of the lung energy (*chi*). The free movement of the lung *chi* keeps the nasal passages clear and maintains a firm barrier against external stimulation.

The spleen and kidneys are also important in regulating immune functions. Dysfunctions in the three organs are regarded as the root of allergic rhinitis and other respiratory problems. Those with allergic rhinitis often also sweat excessively, have a poor appetite and are tired.

To invigorate the organs and balance the body's immunity, TCM physicians prescribe herbs such as largehead atractylodes root (*bai shu*), poria, astragalus root, Korean ginseng, schisandra, eucommia bark, liquorice root, fresh ginger and red dates.

One prescription is Jade Windscreen Powder (*yu ping feng san*), which contains

three ingredients: astragalus root, largehead atractylodes root and ledebouriella root (*fang feng*).

Astragalus enhances lung and spleen functions, atractylodes root strengthens and replenishes *chi* production, and ledebouriella root works on the body surface to fight pathogens.

The combination is said to help the body surface become more adaptive to environmental changes. However, if there is fever or a yellowish and thick nasal secretion, that means excessive heat and wind pathogens are present, so additional herbs such as mulberry leaf, chrysanthemum and reed rhizome are used to expel the pathogens and promote the normal functioning of the nasal passages.

Before taking medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner