

HEALTH

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TCM

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Hay fever

In allergic rhinitis, the patient suffers from frequent attacks of sneezing, nasal discharge or blockage of the nasal passages.

It may be seasonal or perennial. Seasonal rhinitis is often called hay fever. It's prevalent in the teenage years, when up to 30 per cent of young people suffer symptoms in the summer months.

In the traditional Chinese medicine manual *Huang Ti Nei Ching* (The Yellow Emperor's Medicine Classic), a similarly described disease is referred to as *bi-qiu* or *qiu-ti*. *Bi-qiu* means profuse watery nasal discharge and *qiu-ti* means sneezing and profuse watery nasal discharge.

The nose is the most yang part of the body. Exogenous yang evils, such as wind, can attack it easily. This invasion is usually accompanied by other evils such as cold, heat or damp.

The nose is also the external opening of the lungs and helps them to control the protective *chi* (responsible for protecting against illness). When the body is weak, problems such as a lung *chi* deficiency or a weak protective *chi* mean exogenous evils can attack the nose and

result in nasal disorders. With allergic rhinitis, the lungs, spleen and kidneys are the main organs involved in the development of allergic rhinitis.

TCM treatment depends on the pattern the patient displays. A trained TCM practitioner is able to diagnose the disharmony pattern and recommend herbal decoctions. Acupuncture and massage may also be used. Acupuncture at the distal and proximal points, or along the meridians, is believed to help regulate the meridians and *chi* movement, facilitate the flow of lung *chi*, and ventilate the nose.

Massage of the lumbar and sacral regions of the spine is also said to help strengthen the yin and yang *chi* and is commonly applied in nasal diseases. During attacks of allergic rhinitis, certain foods should be eaten more frequently. These include acrid-tasting foods that promote warmth and sweating, and food that facilitates the lung's dissemination functions. These are believed to help eliminate the exogenous evils.

Such foods include spring onions, ginger, or cilantro (fresh coriander, below). Chinese date, walnut, Chinese yam, dried

mushrooms and mutton should also be eaten. They're said to invigorate *chi*, cure deficiency and build up resistance.

In general, limit consumption of cold, greasy and spicy foods. Likewise, food known to trigger an attack should be avoided.

Some steps can be taken to minimise the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. Avoid exposure to dust and keep the living environment clean. Regular exercise will also strengthen the body's resistance.

Rose Tse and Angela Collingwood are editors for Shen-Nong, a subsidiary of Integrated Chinese Medicine. Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or general practitioner