

# NutraLiving

The online newsletter dedicated to health, wellness and living your best life – *naturally*.

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## Natural remedies for seasonal allergies

It's that time of year again. The sun is shining, the flowers are in bloom, the trees are lush with leaves...but your eyes are itchy, your nose is stuffy and you can't seem to shake that sense of fatigue. Hello, seasonal allergies!

Allergic reactions occur when a normally harmless substance (an allergen) triggers the release of the inflammatory compound histamine in certain individuals. Common allergens include dust, pollen, animal dander and compounds found in certain foods. The main culprits responsible for seasonal allergies are pollen and molds found in the air during warmer months.

Also known as hayfever or allergic rhinitis, seasonal allergies are a mild form of allergy characterized by sneezing, runny nose and itchy eyes. Many of us are familiar with these symp-



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allergy

toms; in fact, an estimated 20% of Americans suffer from some form of allergy, with seasonal being one of the most common types. To reduce the uncomfortable effects of seasonal allergies, experts recommend staying indoors when pollen counts are high, keeping windows closed and washing hands and face frequently. However, these preventative measures are often not enough.

Fortunately, a wide range of allergy treatments are available. Antihistamines

are the most common pharmaceutical remedy, but there are also a number of natural, non-drug alternatives to choose from.

According to the scientific evidence to date, the following ingredients/treatments may help alleviate seasonal allergy symptoms:

**Butterbur** – according to a number of studies, butterbur may help prevent allergic rhinitis

**Bromelain** – although

the evidence is conflicting, some studies have found that bromelain may reduce swelling of the nasal passage, making it easier to breathe

**Stinging nettle** – studies

have found stinging nettle to be effective for the treatment of allergic rhinitis. Natural health products containing stinging nettle are currently available for sale in Canada.

**Nasal irrigation** – the use of a neti pot has been shown to reduce symptoms of allergic rhinitis by flushing irritating allergens from the nasal passage.

**Important Note:** Always con-

sult a healthcare practitioner before using natural health products, drugs or other treatments. Do not use any of the above treatments if you are allergic or hypersensitive to related plants.

Sources: Natural Standard; New Hope 360

## Ask Jenny: Natural Health Products



**Jennifer Molnar, M.Sc., a nutritional scientist at NDI, answers all your burning questions about the not-so-straightforward world of natural health products (a.k.a. dietary supplements).**

**Q: Are there any supplements I can take to protect my skin from sun damage?** Jeff M., Harrisburg, PA

**A:** Protecting your skin from the sun's harmful UV rays is one of the easiest and most effective ways to prevent skin cancer and visible signs of aging.

The body of research does suggest that certain ingredients, particularly carotenoids, may help protect skin from sun damage when taken orally.

Remember the theory that if you eat too many carrots your skin will turn orange? This actually has some truth to it. When you consume high amounts of beta-carotene—the carotenoid found in yellow- and orange-hued

fruits and vegetables—the compound becomes incorporated into your skin, imparting an orangey tinge.

What does this have to do with sun protection? Carotenoids are plant pigments, and their purpose in nature is to absorb light. This is similar to how our skin's own pigment (melanin) works. The darker your skin, the more melanin you have and the better protected your skin is from the sun. Carotenoids are also potent antioxidants that help scavenge skin-damaging free radicals.

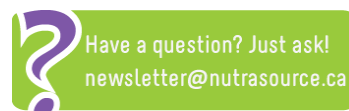
Overall, research shows that increased levels of carotenoids in your skin provides an added layer of protection from UV rays.

That being said, don't toss your

sunscreen yet! The degree of protection you'd get from beta-carotene supplementation is equivalent to an SPF of 4 at most. Plus, it can take several months for the beneficial effects to kick in.

The take-home message: carotenoid supplements should not be viewed as a replacement for sunscreen, and instead considered as part of an integrative approach. Be sure to consult with your healthcare practitioner prior to starting any supplement regimen, and always read the label carefully.

Sources: Annual Review of Nutrition; Photochemistry & Photobiology



## HOT INGREDIENT

### Camu camu

**What is it?** Camu camu (*Myrciaria dubia*) is a small berry-like fruit native to the Amazon rainforest. It is exceptionally rich in vitamin C, flavonoids and amino acids.

**What does it do?** Camu camu has been shown to display potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, making it a promising ingredient for disease prevention. One study also found potential anti-cancer effects of cya-

nidin-3-glucoside, a polyphenol found in camu camu.

**Is it safe?** Camu camu has been administered to humans (male smokers) in the form of juice with no adverse effects. Although its safety, both long-term and at high doses, has not been extensively studied in people, natural health products containing camu camu are currently available on the market in both Canada and the U.S.

Sources: Journal of Agricultural Food Chemistry; Journal of Cardiology; Natural Health Products Directorate Licenced NHP Database; NewHope360; NutraIngredients-USA

## Feature Recipe: *Grilled honey chicken skewers with peach-pecan quinoa salad*

One of the best things about summer is the wide availability of local, seasonal produce. Peaches are at their peak this time of year and pair well with sweet and savoury dishes alike (including grilled chicken). These skewers are simple to assemble and cook, and the nuttiness of the quinoa-pecan salad is a perfect compliment. Serves 4.

### For the skewers:

#### Ingredients

One medium **peach** contains just 38 calories and 2 grams of belly-filling fibre. Peaches are a source of vitamin C for the maintenance of overall good health and also contain a substantial amount of potassium and beta-carotene.

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts sliced into thin strips (about 1 inch wide)
- 24 wooden skewers, soaked in water for 30 minutes
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 4 tbsp canola oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

#### Directions

Pre-heat barbecue or stovetop grill to medium-high heat. In a large bowl, add the honey, soy sauce, canola oil and pepper. Whisk to combine and add the chicken. Marinate, refrigerated, for at least 30 minutes.

Carefully thread chicken strips onto wooden skewers, one per skewer. Set aside on a chilled plate until all skewers have been prepared. Sea-



son with salt and pepper.

When the grill is hot, brush with oil. Grill skewers for about 5 minutes per side until well browned and cooked through.

### For the salad:

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups quinoa

Like other fresh herbs, **basil** contains numerous active plant compounds that have disease-fighting properties. Basil has demonstrated antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer and cardiovascular-preventing properties.

- 2 ripe peaches, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup pecans, coarsely chopped
- 10 leaves fresh basil, rolled and then thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp honey
- Salt and pepper, to taste

#### Directions

Cook the quinoa according to package directions. In a large bowl, combine the quinoa, peaches, pecans and basil and toss to combine. In a separate bowl, whisk together the vinegar, oil, honey and salt and pepper. Add to the quinoa mixture and toss. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Garnish with more basil. Can be served warm or cold.

Source: Foodland Ontario; Health Canada



## In Season Now: *Tomatoes*

Summer is finally here, and that means one thing: tomato season! Available in Ontario from July through October, juicy field tomatoes are now ripe for the picking. Tomatoes are a good source of **vitamin C**, **vitamin A** and **folacin**, (all of which help maintain overall good health) and also boast high levels of the antioxidant compound **lycopene**. Interestingly, unlike other active plant compounds that may be destroyed or altered during the cooking process, the bioavailability of lycopene actually increases when tomatoes are cooked.



Take advantage of the health benefits of fresh tomatoes by chopping them and tossing with chunks of cucumber, feta cheese and a simple vinaigrette. Or, whip up a batch of gazpacho, an Italian cold soup. Put cooked tomatoes to good use by using tomato paste as a base for chilis, stews and sauces. Roasting or grilling tomatoes also brings out their natural sweetness.

Sources: Foodland Ontario; Journal of Food Science Education

## Words of wisdom: Increase your fruit & vegetable intake with these 3 easy tips

### *Instead of...*

Traditional lasagna with meat sauce and cheese

A sandwich stacked with processed lunch meats, mayonnaise and cheese

Cream-based soups

### *...try:*

Butternut squash lasagna or stuffed shells with ricotta cheese and fresh sage

A hummus sandwich topped with avocado, tomato and bean sprouts

Minestrone, gazpacho or puréed vegetable soups



*We want to hear from you!*

If you have a question or comment, or would like to see a certain topic covered in the next issue, we're all ears! Simply send us an email ([newsletter@nutrasource.ca](mailto:newsletter@nutrasource.ca)) or connect with us on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **our blog**.



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