

Hayfever and Springtime Allergies

By Heidi Hawkins, MAc, LAc

Springtime is the season of the liver *zang*, as well as the entire liver system. After a winter of heavy food, holiday binging, and not much exercise, the liver awakens and gets things moving.

Gallbladder flare-ups are common, as are gallbladder channel headaches. Hayfever kicks in, as do less obvious springtime allergies. Allergies can cause a vast array of symptoms, but if the symptoms are not traditional, the allergy usually goes undiagnosed. One aspect of those gallbladder headaches may indeed be seasonal allergies.

As the *qi* begins to move and the liver system becomes more active, stagnant toxins may become more apparent. The liver wants nothing more than a spring cleaning - for most, this means fasting and cleansing diets. However, most Americans are overfed year-round. Few Americans fast voluntarily. In our not-so-distant ancestry, fasting was common. No food? What are you going to eat? In springtime, you can plant food, but there's nothing to harvest until later - it's a historically common time to go hungry. When the body isn't taking in food, it has a chance to rest from digestion and focus on detoxifying the body in general (and the liver in particular).

Overeating and the constancy of taking in food creates a plethora of stagnations in the body. The liver *qi* stagnates; the gallbladder fills with stones from poor quality and excessive fats mingled with toxins and parasites. The blood has been stagnating all winter, and now it becomes noticeable. The most obvious, though, is often stagnant phlegm. Parasites and lingering pathogenic factors (LPFs) are ubiquitous in our chemically-poisoned world. Springtime is the best opportunity to throw these out - harness the liver's *qi* at its prime and move out the toxins and pathogens. This is what the body attempts to do, and all of nature supports this move. It is a natural part of the cycle of life. If winter didn't kill you off, it's time to get moving!

The element of the liver is wood, and trees are often the first to pollinate. The phlegm starts moving; the eyes water; the sinuses gush; and Americans all over rush to find something - anything! - to stuff that unsightly phlegm back in deeper than ever. When it comes to phlegm, no drug is too toxic. Steroidal medications are the greatest tragedy to be foisted upon the unwitting hayfever sufferer. Street heroin is less toxic.

The solution is clear to those who can see it: the phlegm and its accompanying toxins and parasites must come out. Stuffing these problems deeper causes deeper problems, such as cancer and multiple sclerosis, depending on the constitution of the sufferer.

Fasting and cleansing is tricky business. In healthy people, routine, seasonally appropriate fasting and cleansing is relatively non-problematic. However, there are very few healthy people. Natural health practitioners who understand the mechanisms at stake can be a tremendous help for a less-than-healthy person attempting to navigate a springtime cleanse and fast. Naturopathic doctors (NDs) are usually ahead of practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in this regard.

Because TCM is older than chemical toxicity, it is often left up to the individual practitioner to learn how to treat modern diseases and disorders. To most, the lung involvement with hayfever is obvious. The liver component, a deeper part of the syndrome, is often overlooked. The liver is trying to purge the body, and the lung system is a handy route for expelling toxins and phlegm. The lung involvement is not really so significant. All that discomfort of the lung system is just a symptom. Look deeper.

The liver's soul aspect, the *hun*, seeks to express its eternal and perfect nature in a world of instability and imperfection. The liver's knowledge of personal growth is unmatched. When the soul is denied in a materialistic person and reinforced by a materialistic culture, no wonder stagnation explodes into anger and frustration, the emotions of the liver. Creativity and passion can erupt with destructiveness, when denied any other outlet. All humans seek to create, to grow, to change - it is in our very nature. We seek healing, and now is the time.

Food cures are often the safest approach. Eating absolutely nothing is too extreme for many people; the more deficient their constitution, the more true this is. Paul Pitchford's book *Healing with Whole Foods* is an excellent resource.

Here are foods I often suggest, all of which should be organic:

- Granny smith apples
- Beets
- Carrots
- Pears
- Lemon
- Lime
- Miso soup
- Rice
- Vegetables

All foods should be as fresh as possible and prepared in a clean environment. Many people do well on a 36-hour vegetable juice-only fast. This is a relatively quick and dirty method. It's not very pleasant for most people, but it gets the job done in a relatively safe manner. I recommend sleeping at both ends of the fast and going without food for one day in between.

There are as many different approaches to fasting and cleansing as there are people. Chlorella tablets may help people who experience digestive upset when they fast. Drinking a lot of water or herbal tea is imperative. Avoiding toxins; addictive chemicals; allergenic foods; etc. is mandatory, or fasting is pointless. Spring is a great time to kick bad habits! Hayfever is just a healing crisis. Make the most of the opportunity.

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