

## Eat to Ease Your Allergies -

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You won't cure your nasal allergies with a special diet. But what you eat can make a difference in how you feel. Some foods may make symptoms better, and some may make them worse.

### Nasal Allergies: Foods That Help

**Fish.** Some studies have found that omega-3 fatty acids -- found naturally in salmon, tuna, and other fish -- may lower the risk of getting allergies in the first place. Could they help treat people who already have allergies? While some early evidence is promising, it's too soon to say, says Clifford W. Bassett, MD, an allergist at the NYU School of Medicine.

**Fruits and vegetables.** One Spanish study found that kids with allergic asthma who ate lots of tomatoes, eggplant, cucumber, green beans, and zucchini had fewer symptoms than kids who didn't. Fruits and vegetables high in vitamins C and E -- such as spinach, broccoli, and tomatoes -- may also lessen swelling in the airways.

**Hot drinks and soup.** Fluids like these can indirectly warm up the airways as they go down. That helps break up mucus in the lungs, making it easier to cough up.

**Mediterranean diet.** Nuts, healthy oils, fresh fruits and vegetables, fish, and even red wine are good for your heart, and maybe your airways, too. One study found that the diet helped control severe asthma symptoms. Another found that pregnant women who ate this way were less likely to have kids with allergies or asthma.

**Yogurt.** You might not think that your gastrointestinal tract has much to do with your runny nose. While there is conflicting evidence, some experts say that having healthy "good" bacteria -- probiotics -- in the intestines may help allergy symptoms such as runny nose and congestion of the nasal passages. One study found that allergic kids who drank milk enriched with probiotics had fewer pollen allergy symptoms. Yogurt is a good natural source of probiotics. Buy a brand that has live cultures in it.

### Foods to Avoid

**Raw fruits and vegetables.** Some pollens have proteins that are very similar to those in common fruits and vegetables. Your body can mistake the two. If you're allergic to ragweed, for example, you might also have symptoms after eating cantaloupe or watermelon.

Sometimes allergy triggers might catch you by surprise. "Birch and hazelnut have similar proteins," says Bassett. "So people with a birch allergy may get symptoms after drinking a cup of hazelnut coffee in the morning."

Before you start redoing your grocery list, know that cooking fruits and veggies first often destroys the proteins. That lowers your risk of a reaction.

**Spicy food.** Spices can trigger the release of histamine. That's the chemical that causes swelling and stuffiness in the nasal passages.

**Alcohol.** For some people, a glass of alcohol causes swelling and stuffiness in the nose. If you're already congested, that could make your symptoms worse.

If you have nasal allergies, try making some changes to your diet. See if it eases your symptoms. But Bassett warns that if you are in major discomfort, you shouldn't try to treat it on your own.

"Changing your diet can help, but it's no substitute for treatment with allergy medication," he says. Out-of-control allergies can cause a lot of sickness and misery. Good medical care will get your symptoms under control.