

Holistic methods offer alternative approach for some allergy sufferers

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Every morning was the same for Mary.

The former Newport Beach resident would awaken to the sound of her own sneezing, wheezing and coughing, and the day's first glance was viewed through itchy, watery eyes. She grew weary from the struggle with her immune system.

This feeling would linger throughout the day, in defiance of the abundance of prescription drugs, allergy shots, steroid nasal sprays and eye drops she had tried over the years.

"I battled allergies my whole life. Cats, dust and also some foods," said Mary, who declined to give her last name.

Feeling helpless, and as if she had nothing to lose, she veered off from the strictly Western medicine path she was on and incorporated holistic methods

into her search for allergy relief.

The first natural treatment she tried was EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), an effort to reduce or remove emotional distress and allergies from the body through verbal affirmations and tapping techniques. The

tapping is conducted on points of the body - known as meridian points - where energy flows, or is blocked.

"EFT really worked for me," Mary said. "When I was exercising I would tap on the meridian points and get immediate relief - so, like, if I was running and got an allergy-like asthma attack, I could do this and be fine. Also, if I was around cats I noticed that it helped and I could tap and get relief right away."

However, EFT didn't eliminate Mary's allergies. It wasn't

until she discovered another alternative practice - Brain Integration Technique - that she found a holistic cure that fully worked for her.

"With Brain Integration Therapy, through touch, they can open up the neural pathways (energy channels) that are blocked and help take away the allergen," she said. "This has cured my cat allergy completely and I was severely allergic to cats before. Before, I would have to take a shower and use an inhaler just to get a little relief."

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Mary is a believer in EFT for those with seasonal or chronic allergies. That said, she remains an advocate for more traditional forms of allergy treatment as well.

"Western medicine and other ways of treating allergies are still important," she said. "Eastern treats the root and Western is good when you are feeling really ill."

Mary isn't alone in her dual approach. There's an increasing trend in the use of integrative medicine - the pairing of traditional medicine with less common treatments. As of 2007, 38 percent of U.S. adults were using some form of complementary and alternative medicine, according to a study conducted by the National Institutes of Health.

For allergy sufferers, there are several alternative treatment

What it is: The most common holistic form of allergy treatment, this traditional Chinese Medicine technique involves inserting needles into meridian - energy - points on the body for relief.

How it works: An acupuncture session generally involves the practitioner taking the patient's blood pressure, checking the tongue (believed to show signs of health and disease throughout the body) and then proceeding with a patient-specific needle treatment on the body for at least 20 minutes.

For allergies, an acupuncturist may prescribe medicinal herbs in conjunction with needle treatment.

"Herbs tend to be more corrective Acupuncture would

be more of a symptom relief, whereas herbs can actually remove allergies from the body completely."



Treatment occurs by holding the vials of allergens with acupuncture needles while resting. (Steve McCrank / Staff Photographer)

options to choose from, including the following:

Acupuncture



Vials are labeled with the numerous allergens. (Steve McCrank / Staff Photographer)

An acupuncturist may also ask the patient to eliminate certain foods from the diet until the immune system can handle the allergen.

"When I have a patient with allergic symptoms, sometimes I will ask them to make eliminations or go on detox diets," . "For instance, taking out common stressors from their diet, whether it is milk, gluten, caffeine, red meat, (nightshade) vegetables, often helps."

After the patient has avoided a particular food or allergen, Ipenburg then has the patient slowly resume exposure to the allergen to determine whether the treatment was effective.

Acupuncture, which Ipenburg said is regularly paired with Western medicine, is often used for treating patients with a combination of allergies and asthma.

"If patients do have both allergies and asthmas, Chinese Medicine treats the person as the whole, so if one thing gets better, the rest of their symptoms tend to get better," said Lawrence Taw, assistant clinical

professor at the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine.

According to Taw, acupuncture tends to be more effective on patients with just asthmas versus those with just allergies. But he said acupuncture can provide some relief to allergy sufferers, especially when accompanying traditional Western forms of drugs and injections.

," said Natha Surinsuk, an acupuncturist with Eastern Therapeutics in Canoga Park. " said Marion Ipenburg, an acupuncturist and physical therapist at East West Healing Arts in San Pedro Approximate cost: \$50-\$125 per visit.

NAET

What it is: NAET (Nambudripad's Allergy Elimination Technique) is a non-invasive, drug-free method for relieving allergy symptoms.

Created by former acupuncturist Devi Nambudripad, it has strong roots in Eastern medicine and philosophies, and works under

the belief that allergies are caused by energy blockages that can be alleviated through the use of acupuncture or acupressure, and vibration therapy.

NAET stems from the theory that all organs have an electromagnetic frequency. Thus, practitioners work toward eliminating allergy symptoms by finding the frequencies in the body that are blocked and returning those frequencies to their original, healthy condition.

How it works: In the initial visit, a patient would likely undergo a muscle test (applied kinesiology) to determine what the body is allergic to. Some muscles may be weakened when allergies are triggered and energy flow is blocked.

Once this is determined, the NAET practitioner will work on opening up the energy pathway through a technique in which the patient holds a glass vial containing the allergen, for 20 minutes. This is often done in tandem with acupuncture or acupressure.

Some practitioners also treat emotions - through meditation and visualization - with which they feel their patients may be struggling.

"A lot of times ailments are related to emotions," says , an NAET practitioner at Alternative Health and Wellbeing in Redondo Beach.

Treatment generally takes multiple sessions.

"Some allergies are like peeling away at an onion," Lebay said, acknowledging the

commitment involved. "Is it food, environmental - and what amount is setting what off?"

Approximate cost: From \$75 to \$250-plus per visit.

Chantaal Lebay EFT

What it is: EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) is a form of psychotherapy used for treating disease, which is based on the concept that emotional trauma creates illness.

EFT studies have shown that the technique reduces emotional responses that may set off forms of distress and disease. The goal is to remove this discomfort so the body can heal itself naturally.

How it works: EFT involves the patient learning how to tap the body's meridian points - like those used while visualizing the issue being treated (in this case allergies) to gain relief from symptoms.

"Memories and trauma are not just in the

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brain, "What we realize now is that trauma, pain and allergies seem to be stored in these different meridians in the body," she said. "For example, the EFT tapping points - top of the head, side of the eyes, under the eyes, under the nose, under the mouth, etc., - are the main areas that seem to be holding toxins and allergies. I believe that all of these stressful events get stored in our body and lead to illness, like allergies."

The purpose of EFT is to help clear the allergen from the body emotionally so that the next time the patient comes in contact with the allergen there is nothing left in the body to trigger a response.

According to acupuncturist Surinsuk, EFT works well when combined with acupuncture.

Approximate cost: \$80 to \$200-plus per visit in acupuncture - " said , a Long Beach clinical psychologist and EFT practitioner.

" Dr. Vivian Lamphear ; the website <http://eftuniverse.com> offers free training for those who want to learn how to treat themselves.

BIT

What it is: BIT (Brain Integration Therapy), though not specifically for physical conditions, works to reprogram the brain to identify with a healthier immune system.

The idea is that a mental response to allergens causes a physical response - such as sneezing and coughing - and that if the mental response is eliminated, the physical reaction can be cured.

How it works: Like NAET, BIT incorporates applied kinesiology and acupuncture to pinpoint specific allergies. The difference is that once the allergen is determined, BIT therapy - the electromagnetic monitoring of brain action - is used to signal the brain to turn off the allergic reaction.

Approximate cost: \$160-plus per hour.

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