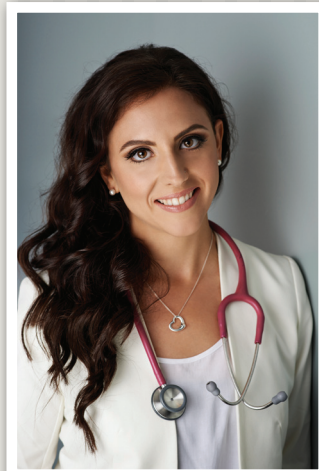


ASK THE NATUROPATH: DR ALLANA POLO



Q: I'm tired of suffering from seasonal allergies! Are there any natural alternatives to help relieve the symptoms?

A: Allergies plague millions of people and many only get marginal relief from prescription or over-the-counter drugs while also dealing with a risk of negative side effects. Natural remedies, however, often have fewer side effects and can help combat allergic reactions. Quercetin is a natural, plant-derived compound that assists in stabilizing mast cells and inhibits the production of histamine, the culprit of allergy symptoms. Stinging nettle is another natural antihistamine. It mimics the behaviour of many of the drugs used to treat allergies, but without unwanted side effects such as dry mouth and drowsiness. You can also incorporate allergy-fighting foods into your diet. Omega-3 fatty acids, for example, help fight inflammation. Studies show that people who regularly ate foods rich in Omega-3 were less likely to suffer allergy symptoms than those who had less in their diet. Cold-water fish, grass-fed meat, eggs, walnuts and flaxseed oil are all great sources.

Q: What is the difference between a food allergy, sensitivity and intolerance?

A: Food allergies are caused by an immune system reaction that releases IgE (Immunoglobulin E) antibodies and chemicals like histamines. Usually, there is an immediate reaction such as hives, swelling or anaphylaxis. Food allergies are the easiest to diagnose and can be determined by an allergist with a skin prick or blood test. Food sensitivities and intolerances are often harder to diagnose as the symptoms range from gas and bloating to mental fog and fatigue. With food intolerance, the body is lacking a particular enzyme, which leads to impaired digestion. Food sensitivities, much like allergies, cause an immune reaction in the body. However, this time it releases IgG (Immunoglobulin G) antibodies. IgG reactions are much slower to develop—up to 72 hours—and can last for days. Testing for IgG food sensitivities can be performed in a naturopath clinic with a simple finger prick to obtain a small sample of blood.

Q: I usually crash between 2-3pm and start craving sugar or salt. How can I stay energized throughout the day?

A: Your crash is due to a low blood sugar level. Waiting too long between meals, skipping meals altogether, or eating a large meal rich

in sugars and carbohydrates can all cause this. Lean proteins and fiber are a powerful combination that allows you to stay full and energized throughout the day. A protein-packed breakfast is important to set you up for the day, while eating a well-balanced lunch full of good fats, lean protein and fiber will allow you to cruise through the day. Avoid heavy lunches filled with processed and refined carbohydrates. Try a protein smoothie in the morning, some nuts or veggies and hummus as a snack, and some avocados in your protein-packed salad for lunch. If you have a hankering for something sweet, opt for an apple, orange or banana. Your body will thank you. Finally, keep an eye out for the words dextrose, corn sugar, fructose and high fructose corn syrup on labels as they will only cause your blood sugar to spike, leaving you with that dreaded afternoon crash.

Q: I have been struggling to lose these last 15 pounds. It seems like no matter how much I exercise or how well I eat, the scale doesn't seem to budge. What's going on?

A: The approach we most often hear is the one most frustrating! "Eat less and exercise more." I firmly believe this is simply not the answer. We are starting to learn how hormonal imbalances may be the reasons why your efforts to drop weight are backfiring. Thyroid and sex hormone imbalances, as well as adrenal fatigue, may all play a part. Unless you do something about balancing these hormones, those last few pounds will be there for the long haul. Cortisol, the stress hormone, not only prevents people from losing weight, but also actually contributes to the "spare tire" around your waist! There are many natural steps that can make a big difference, including bio-identical hormones or thyroid support. But in the meantime, the easy answer is sleep. Lack of sleep causes insulin resistance, meaning that every type of food you eat—especially carbs—will likely be stored as fat. Getting more rest promotes growth hormones, which can improve insulin sensitivity and help with weight loss.

Dr Allana Polo is passionate about utilizing naturopathic therapies to treat the patient rather than the condition. She specializes in weight loss, hormonal imbalances and food intolerances. Dr Polo graduated from the University of Alberta and completed her four-year Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto. Find out more about Dr Polo's weight loss program at www.poundaday.ca.