



Environmental Allergies

For many people, environmental allergens are a common reality of everyday life that leave you constantly sniffing, sneezing, coughing, or itching. Environmental allergies affect 30% of the North American population, which is a significant amount of the population considering that one of the most frequent culprits is pollen. Other possible environmental allergens include, dust, mildew, mold spores, feathers, ragweed, and environmental dander. Different allergens affect people differently, but allergy symptoms can be generally categorized into three levels of severity. Mild reactions include congestion, sneezing, and itchy/watery eyes. Moderate reactions are characterized by difficulty breathing, and itchiness experienced in more than one area of the body. Finally, the last category is severe reactions, also known as anaphylaxis, which is a life-threatening reaction that includes symptoms such as swelling of the respiratory tract, difficulty swallowing, vomiting, and diarrhea. Additionally, chronic inflammation from environmental allergens can present as long-lasting colds, recurrent ear or sinus infections, as well as prolonged wheezing after exercise. Although there are certain months deemed “allergy season”, allergies occur year-round and exposure can occur anywhere such as in your home, at work, at school, or on your walk to the mailbox.



How Do Allergens Work?

When an allergen enters the body, your immune system responds by creating an antibody that is able to fight off the allergen. The antigen then attaches itself to the allergen and explodes it. This process releases histamine, which is the substance responsible for creating your allergy symptoms. Sometimes even if you are able to control your environmental allergies, you will still experience an allergic reaction - this is due to cross-reactivity. During times of high environmental allergies, your body is hypersensitive to triggering an immune response when the allergen is present. Due to this sensitivity, your body will often cross-react to certain food allergens that behave similarly to the environmental allergen that causes you trouble.





Leaky Gut Syndrome

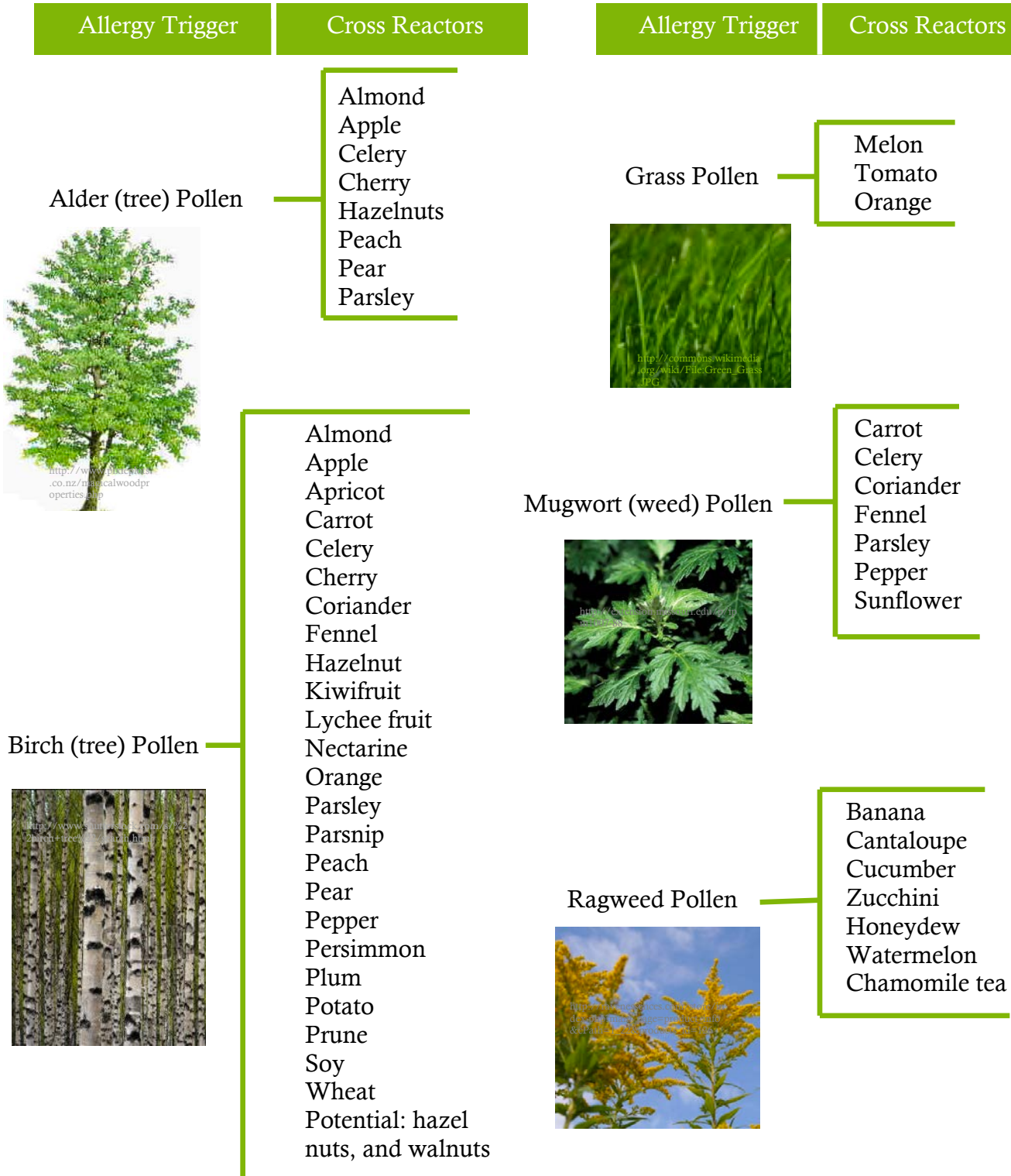
In order for the immune system to efficiently and effectively operate, the proper digestion and absorption of nutrients needs to occur. The intestinal lining is the first defense mechanism of our immune system, where properly digested nutrients are absorbed into the blood stream. Damage to the intestinal lining causes the permeability of the intestine to increase, which degrades the screening process and allows larger, undigested food molecules as well as allergens to enter into the bloodstream. This issue is known as the leaky gut syndrome, and can be caused by various factors such as a diet high in processed foods, chronic stress, inflammation, certain medications, high levels of yeast (Candida), and a lack of zinc which is important to maintain the strength of the intestinal lining. Once undigested particles enter into your blood stream, your immune system incorrectly registers these molecules as foreign invaders and creates antibodies to fight them off. This syndrome causes the immune system to react this way to various invaders and causes an allergic reaction to substances like environmental allergens that were once harmless.

Weather and Environmental Allergies

The weather plays an important role in the growth and spread of environmental allergies. Days of high winds allow the spread allergens easily, while hot/humid days increase the growth of allergenic spores. Rain also increases the growth of fungi and mold spores. Check out the seasonal pollen forecast at The Weather Network at http://www.theweathernetwork.com/pollenfx/canpollen_en



Foods That May Cross-React With Your Environmental Allergies





NATURE MEDICINE

Reference

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