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the **a b c** of *allergy*

An allergy is an inappropriate response by the body's immune system to any substance that would not normally be regarded as harmful. The immune system is constantly on the look out for any 'foreigners' or 'invaders' which, if identified, trigger a complex response involving the white blood cells.

If therefore, it wrongly identifies a non-toxic substance as an invader, the white cells overreact and response is often dramatic and harmful to the individual, producing a variety of symptoms.

These can include anything from a cough and wheezing to running nose and eyes and skin rashes. The symptom will depend on whether the culprit was ingested as food i.e. shellfish or eggs, or inhaled as with pollens or if came into direct contact with the skin, such as nickel in jewellery which then produces a dermatitis. The worst and potentially fatal result is anaphylactic shock, where the affected person collapses within seconds or minutes of exposure to the allergen and requires an immediate injection of adrenaline to reverse the effects. Such cases are luckily rare and are often the culmination of repeated exposure to the allergen providing an increasingly severe response until it is overwhelming.

Generally the conventional treatment involves antihistamine drugs, because during allergic response the body releases histamine into the tissues from specialised mast cells and this causes many of the symptoms experienced. Steroids and desensitising injections are also used. The latter gradually expose the body to increasing concentrations of the problem substance to provide a level of tolerance.

As I write this article it is supposed to be spring, not withstanding the flurry of snowflakes outside my window, for the government has just brought spring officially forward to March 1st! For many people though, spring is the start of the allergy season. First there are tree pollens in the air such as Pussy Willow and Hazel, culminating in late May and June, with the grass pollens leading to classical hay fever. It doesn't stop there, for in the autumn the fungal spores appear but generally with the onset of winter there is respite and relief.

So it is now that we should be considering preventative measures and several FLP products are well placed to help. Obviously avoidance and lifestyle changes are very important but usually a more proactive approach is also needed.



a - Is for Aloe Vera, so good because it is a natural antihistamine. Histamine in the body is produced from the amino acid Histidine and the conversion requires an enzyme whose action is inhibited and impaired by magnesium. In Aloe Vera Gel there is magnesium lactate which effectively does the job, so preventing the body from releasing too much histamine. This in turn prevents or reduces the intensity of the resulting itchy rash called 'Urticaria commonly known as hives' or 'nettle rash', and Aloe Vera doesn't cause the common side effect of drowsiness seen with many conventional antihistamine drugs.

A - could also stand for acemannan, the polysaccharide sugar in Aloe Vera Gel which is an immune balancer or immuno-modulator, acting on the chemical messenger system which controls the activity of white blood cells. A balanced immune system is essential to good health and provision of the appropriate immune response.



b - is for Bee Pollen: nature's finest all round supplement known to the ancient gods as 'Ambrosia' and later a popular brand of creamed rice! (if you are old enough to remember this rice pudding product which is rather out of fashion now). Especially for hay fever sufferers Bee Pollen taken about six weeks before the expected onset of symptoms can reduce the effect and in some cases stop it completely.

The body does not react to the ingested pollen as it would were it to get into the nose or eyes. By taking Bee Pollen, the body recognises it as a friend rather than as a foe, so the allergic response is altered. The actual mechanism is uncertain but it may be caused through the action of quercetin (a bioflavonoid found in Bee Pollen). Quercetin also inhibits the release of histamine which may also contribute to the lessened allergic response. Bee Pollen should be started in small amounts and gradually built up to say 6-8 tablets or even more per day during the pre-seasonal phase.



C - is for vitamin C or ascorbic acid. FLP's delayed release vitamin C formula Absorbent-C is the perfect partner to Bee Pollen and Aloe Vera Gel, as vitamin C with its ubiquitous role is also capable of modifying the allergic response. As a prophylactic about 500mg per day should be enough, although one can be taken more on a short time basis.

Other natural substances known to help in this area are vitamin B6, also found in Bee Pollen and liquorice, so Lycium Plus can also be considered.

So in brief the **abc** of allergy could also be interpreted as:

a - for avoidance of the allergy

b - for balancing of the immune system

C - for Control of the symptoms

I think I preferred it when Spring started on March 21!