

# DID YOU KNOW THAT TOUCH CAN PROVIDE RELIEF FROM SEASONAL ALLERGIES?

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Now that spring is here, many of your clients are probably suffering from seasonal allergies.

How can hands-on work help them?

Many of our clients experience allergy symptoms that can be effectively addressed by Swedish massage, positional release, lymphatic drainage, [trigger-point therapy](#) and [CranioSacral Therapy](#).

As spring approaches, you can be aware of the benefits of massage and other touch therapies for allergy relief.

These benefits include stress reduction; relief of neck-and-shoulder tension, which opens sinuses; lymph movement, which reduces irritation and inflammation; increased circulation; and promotion of a healthier immune system.

If we chase allergy symptoms, the client may experience temporary relief; however, if we look at how seasonal allergies affect the body as a whole, we are able to see how all of the pieces of the allergy puzzle fit together.

Taking this larger view helps us identify the modalities that will facilitate self-correction.

To understand allergy symptoms, we begin at the cellular level, where [the immune system is constantly working](#) to address anything it sees as a foreign invader.

## A Natural Approach to Seasonal Allergies

When the immune system encounters an allergen, such as those from pollen, mold, food or insect stings, it releases a chemical called histamine.

Histamine causes allergy symptoms that vary depending on the type of allergen.

If the allergen is something the client has breathed in, the symptoms of allergic reactions can affect his eyes, nose and lungs.

If it is something he ate, it may affect his mouth, stomach and intestines.

Histamine also increases permeability of the capillaries.

Increased vascular permeability causes fluid to escape capillaries and flow into tissue, which leads to the classic symptoms of allergic reactions: a runny nose and watery eyes.

[Stress](#) can exacerbate allergy symptoms by increasing the production of histamines, which trigger the inflammatory response.

This is why inducing relaxation through therapeutic touch improves immune functions and the symptoms of allergic reactions.

The developer of [CranioSacral Therapy](#), John Upledger, DO, OMM, (1932–2012), often said, “Always open the thoracic inlet before doing any work on or above the neck.”

The reason for this instruction is [lymphatic drainage for the whole body](#) drains into the venous system through the thoracic inlet.

As a safety measure, we must open the thoracic inlet to ensure when releasing muscles on or above the neck, there will be a clear passage for fluid release and the system will not back up.

Without a clear passage, our work can make symptoms worse or cause a headache.

The next puzzle piece in allergy relief is drainage of the antibodies out of key areas of the nasal passages.

This drainage happens along the sinus tubes into the throat where contracted sternocleidomastoid can restrict drainage.

Relaxing the sternocleidomastoid can help drainage and often greatly alleviate symptoms.

The sternocleidomastoid muscle gets its name from its three attachments.

One of these, the superior attachment, is at the mastoid process just behind the ear.

From that point, it branches into two parts, and extends down the neck to the manubrium of the sternum and the medial points of the clavicle.

[The sinus tubes](#) go through the branches in the sternocleidomastoid.

If a client carries tension or does repetitive work that affects the neck, shoulders or upper chest, the sternocleidomastoid can clamp down on the sinus tubes.

A tight sternocleidomastoid can, therefore, exacerbate allergy symptoms by preventing drainage.

The sternocleidomastoid and trapezius are innervated by the spinal accessory nerve.

The spinal accessory nerve enters the skull through the foramen magnum, the large opening at the base of the skull.

The nerve courses along the inner wall of the skull toward the jugular foramen, through which it exits the skull.

The spinal accessory nerve is known for being the only cranial nerve to both enter and exit the skull.

# The Take-Away

Understanding the anatomy of this cranial nerve can direct us to where there might be impingement.

When we release this nerve, it in turn releases involved muscles, which encourages drainage and gives the client relief of allergy symptoms.

Additionally, there are many [muscles in the head and face](#) that contain trigger points that, when addressed, will relieve sinus pressure.

Addressing the client's lymph system is another way to help relieve allergy symptoms.

The lymphatic system is a complex network of ducts and vessels that transfer white blood cells and antibodies to organs and tissues.

These cells and antibodies arm the immune system and help one's body combat infections.

The lymph system must rely on hundreds of muscular units, body movements and water intake to move the lymph through the vessels.

Normal lymph movement in the body can be reduced by stress, fatigue, inactivity, cold temperatures, infection, chemical or food additives, age and heredity.

Manually stimulating the flow of lymphatic fluid can reinvigorate the client's immune system and sweep out harmful toxins.

There is such a wide spectrum of signs and symptoms a client can exhibit from an array of antigens.

Realizing how the body is interconnected, you can facilitate self-correction for relief from seasonal allergies.

## About the Author

[Jill Mabry, CST](#), has worked as a CranioSacral Therapist certified with [Upledger Institute International](#) as both a practitioner and presenter for the past 22 years. She received advanced training at Upledger Institute International from John Upledger, D.O. She is devoted to treating clients, from newborns to adults.