

THE OBSERVER:

How can I treat my fruit allergy?

Last year my throat swelled up after eating a plum and I've now been told that I will never be able to eat fruit again. Are there any treatments I can try?

Dr Pierre Dugue, Claudia Louch and Dr Adrian Morris
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Question:

I have suffered from hay fever and asthma since childhood (I am now 39). Last year I was eating a plum and my mouth went itchy, my throat swelled up and I was breathless. My GP referred me to an NHS allergy clinic, where I was told that I have oral allergy syndrome (OAS). They said I will gradually become allergic to eating various fruits and nuts, and that as this happens I must stop eating them. I was also given an EpiPen to use if I have a severe reaction. I want to eat fruit but am pretty scared - it has since happened with peaches and I've started to feel 'itchy' around apples. Should I avoid the whole range of potential problem foods, or just plough on? Are there any alternative treatments that may help?

Claudia Louch

There is evidence that OAS is associated with a vitamin C deficiency, as reported in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology in 2006. In a trial, an OAS patient treated with vitamin C was asymptomatic after a month. You don't need mega-dose supplements - foods such as potatoes, cabbage, citrus fruits and berries should provide the required 40mg a day. Omega-6 and omega-3 essential fatty acids may also help - these have an anti-inflammatory effect when taken together in formulations such as BioCare EPA 1000. They can be taken as daily supplements or for a period after an attack. As a phytotherapist I would also recommend plant-based remedies. Gingko biloba leaf is a great anti-inflammatory agent. Stinging nettle (a rich source of vitamin C), burdock root and marshmallow root are all good for allergies. A phytotherapist will make an exact preparation for you and a customised tincture would be used for one month after an attack.

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