

Warmer weather is here, an indication that spring has sprung. Now is a good time to take stock of your health as it relates to this season. This issue of *Balanced Living* looks at natural ways to tackle both seasonal allergies and house cleaning, simple tips to having a sunnier outlook on life, and provides information on the health benefits of spinach, vitamin D and more. Enjoy!

Yours in health,



Andrew Weil, M.D.



Spring Cleaning Your House Naturally

The transition into a new season is a great time for spring-cleaning. An uncluttered, clean home can not only instill a sense of calm and order, but also promote productivity and organization. This year, why not use environmentally friendly cleaning products in your cleaning routine? Natural cleaning products can be less harmful to humans, pets, and the environment, while still getting the job done.

If you are feeling creative, want to save money, or don't have access to commercial natural cleaning products, try some of these non-toxic cleaning suggestions using common household items – including a natural solution for your garden!

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Natural Seasonal Allergy Help

If sneezing and itchy eyes are affecting your day-to-day routine, you may have seasonal allergies. Luckily you don't need to rely on over-the-counter allergy medications, which can have unpleasant side effects – natural ways to address allergies abound. The following approaches may have beneficial effects on your symptoms - give them a try:

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Monthly Wellness Challenge



Promoting Positivity

Positivity can lift your spirits and improve your emotional well-being. Each week this month, try one thing to promote positivity, such as a random act of kindness, mind-body therapy, [connecting with nature](#), or daily physical fitness. Notice how these simple and fun suggestions can lift your mood and try to make them a habit!

Spring Cleaning Your House Naturally

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- **White Vinegar:** Pour 2 ½ tablespoons of white vinegar in a quart spray bottle; fill the rest with water and, if you like, add a few drops of a pleasant-smelling oil extract such as orange or [lavender](#). A five percent vinegar solution kills 99 percent of bacteria, making this an affordable and effective way to clean countertops, stoves, windows, and refrigerator shelves.
- **Baking Soda:** This all-purpose cleaner is especially effective on glassware, can remove red-wine stains from carpeting, and - when made into a paste with water - can shine stainless steel and silver. You can also make a paste with a Castile- or vegetable-based liquid soap and a drop of essential oil (tea tree or lavender) to safely clean sinks, countertops, tubs, and toilets.
- **Grapefruit-Seed Extract:** Add to water in a spray bottle for an odorless way to kill mold and mildew.
- **Lemon Juice:** Use as a bleaching agent on clothing, and to remove grease from your stove and countertops. You can also add two tablespoons lemon juice to 10 drops of (real) lemon oil and a few drops of jojoba oil to clean and polish wood furniture.
- **Neem:** If you are planting an organic garden, neem is a great natural pest control that is non-toxic to animals and humans. It comes from the seeds and leaves of the Neem tree, *Azadirachta indica*, and acts as [insect repellents](#). Though neem products are somewhat more expensive than most synthetic pesticides, they are worth it for both personal and environmental health.

Natural Seasonal Allergy Help

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- Take freeze-dried [stinging nettles](#) and butterbur. Both herbs perform as well as antihistamines, without the drowsiness.
- Take [vitamin C](#) – it helps promote cellular and immune health.
- Eliminate dairy and any products that contain casein (to avoid immune-system irritation).
- Increase your intake of omega-3 fatty acids - they help combat inflammation caused by allergic reactions. Wild Alaskan salmon or high-quality fish oil supplements are good choices, with freshly ground flaxseeds as a weaker, but healthful addition.
- Eat foods rich in [quercetin](#). This bioflavonoid can help prevent the release of histamine. Citrus fruits, garlic, parsley, apples, broccoli and tea all contain quercetin.
- Eat plenty of antioxidant-rich fruits, such as berries and cherries, to help modify the body's inflammatory response.
- Try nasal douching with a warm saline solution by using a Neti pot.
- Drink plenty of water to keep nasal passages hydrated and to help flush out your system.
- Consider acupuncture. Respiratory conditions, including sinusitis and asthma, have been relieved with acupuncture.
- Avoid going out (or opening windows) before 10 am to avoid highest pollen counts.
- Follow an anti-inflammatory diet and avoid foods you are sensitive to.

The Pollen Defense Pack available through the [Weil Vitamin Advisor](#) contains some of the herbs and vitamins above.



Yoga Pose: Extended Side Angle

For the many people who spend all day sitting hunched over their desks, the Extended Side Angle Pose is a great stretch to open up the chest and strengthen the leg and groin muscles. Closely related to the Triangle Pose and the Warrior I and II Poses, Extended Side Angle combines the athletic lunge with the detoxifying spinal twist.

According to a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, a variety of leg-related yoga poses, one of which was the Extended Side Angle Pose, can improve muscular leg strength.

The health benefits of this pose include:

- **Strengthened and stretched legs, knees, ankles and groin**
- **Opened chest, shoulders and lungs, aiding with breathing**
- **Improved flexibility of the spine and hips**
- **Stimulated abdominal organs and relieved constipation**
- **Helped with low back pain, sciatica and menstrual discomfort**
- **Deepened breathing**

Get step-by-step instruction for practicing the [Extended Side Angle Pose](#), including modifications for beginner and advanced practitioners!

Vitamins A to Zinc, courtesy of the Weil Vitamin Advisor

Vitamin D

Vitamin D – the “sunshine vitamin” – is a fat-soluble hormone that the body can synthesize naturally, which means it can also be deficient in the body in optimal amounts. We need vitamin D to help absorb calcium, promote bone mineralization, strengthen the immune system, and more. Learn all about [vitamin D](#) and its benefits, including who is most at risk for a deficiency.



Seasonal Food: Spinach



Dr. Weil recommends this bright green vegetable as a staple to have on hand in your kitchen. [Spinach](#) is an excellent source of folic acid, potassium, magnesium, vitamin K, carotenes, vitamin C, and has nearly twice the iron of other leafy greens. This nutritional powerhouse is one of the richest dietary sources of lutein, important for healthy eyes and to aid in the prevention of [macular degeneration](#).

Spinach can be enjoyed in many ways such as:

- 1 Raw, as the sweeter taste is a perfect complement to dressings and fruit in salads or smoothies
- 2 Cooked, as its slightly bitter taste lends itself well to a variety of seasonings
- 3 Lightly steamed as a side dish
- 4 Pureed as soup, or added to pastas, casseroles and omelets

Seek out organically grown spinach, as pesticides are commonly used on conventionally grown varieties, and always wash spinach well, even if the package says “pre-washed.” The stems and leaves of spinach tend to pick up sand and dirt, and a good rule of thumb to follow is three thorough rinses.

Try spinach in these recipes:

- [Spinach Toasts](#)
- [Eggs Florentine, Orange-Dill Sauce](#)
- [Spinach Gom Ae](#)
- [Turkish Spinach Salad](#)