

[Return to article page](#)

To print: Select File and then Print from your browser's menu.

This story was printed from FindArticles.com, located at <http://www.findarticles.com>.

Natural Health

July-August, 1998

The man who couldn't lift a pea. (curing food allergies with the Nambudripad Allergy Elimination Technique)

Author/s: Linda Weber

FIVE MILLION AMERICANS SUFFER FOOD ALLERGIES.

A revolutionary treatment detects them by testing the strength of your arm while you hold a suspected food. After a 15-minute acupressure treatment, you're cured--for good!

IT'S 8 A.M. AND DR. ELLEN CUTLER'S first patient of the day, husky Robert Peterson, lies face up on an examination table in Cutler's chiropractic clinic in Corte Madera, Calif. Standing to the side of Peterson, Cutler pushes against her patient's uplifted right arm, which remains strong and straight. The doctor then places a tiny sealed glass vial containing a clear liquid in her patient's left hand: a label on the vial reads "peas." Cutler then repeats the muscle-testing procedure. Again Peterson tries to resist the doctor's pressure, but this time his arm crumples like a rag doll's. "You're allergic to peas," Cutler says.

The diagnostic technique Cutler performed on this patient, called muscle-response testing, is widely discredited by conventional doctors. But to many of the country's 50,000 chiropractors, it's a valued tool for detecting allergies and organ weaknesses in their patients. It doesn't matter who the patient is or how muscular--if the strongest man in the world is allergic to the pea, his arm will go limp, according to advocates of the technique.

Muscle-response testing is the first part of an obscure treatment for allergies called the Nambudripad Allergy Elimination Technique, or NAET. NAET is used by more than 400 practitioners in the United States, mostly chiropractors, to eliminate reactions that a surprising number of people have to common foods, as well as to chemicals, plants, animal dander, and other substances. After the muscle test, the doctor does a simple 15-minute acupressure treatment along the spine while the patient holds the allergen or a vial containing a solution of it. The patient then must avoid the offending substance for 25 hours.

Between 80 and 90 percent of the time, according to doctors who use it, NAET works--permanently. To any of the country's estimated 5 million people whose lives are a living hell because of food allergies, this is news from heaven. Because I've been one of those 5 million for more than 10 years, I badly wanted Dr. Cutler to work her magic on me, but I had my doubts. The idea that holding an allergen while getting acupressure can cure a person of long-standing allergy symptoms seemed too good to be true.

Carrot Allergy Cured

NAET was discovered in the mid-1970s by Devi Nambudripad, D.C., a chiropractor, acupuncturist, and registered nurse in Buena Park, Calif. In her book *Say Goodbye to Illness* (Delta Publishing, 1993), Nambudripad (who was not available for interviews for this article) describes the technique she developed after her own multiple food allergies had forced her for several years to rely largely on a diet of white rice and broccoli. Since childhood Nambudripad had suffered from many ailments, including chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, arthritis, depression, sinusitis, migraine headaches, and a combination of exhaustion and insomnia. It wasn't until she became an adult, however, that she discovered she could eliminate many of her symptoms by banishing certain foods from her diet. As soon as she reintroduced those foods, though, the debilitating symptoms would return.

She accidentally discovered the NAET technique one day when she gave in to the urge to nibble on a carrot, a food she was allergic to. She had an immediate severe reaction. After treating herself with her acupuncture needles, she felt uncharacteristically energetic and noticed that a piece of carrot was still clinging to her skin. Based on her understanding of how energy in the body behaves (which she was studying at the time in acupuncture college), she concluded that something had happened to change the way her body responded to the energy field of the carrot. She did a muscle test on herself while holding the carrot and found that she was no longer allergic to it. (See "Muscle Test Yourself".) From that point on, Nambudripad says, she could eat carrots with no adverse effects. She solidified her NAET theory in the ensuing years and began using the technique on patients in 1986. To date, she has taught the method to approximately 1,000 health care practitioners worldwide, a majority of them chiropractors.

How NAET Works

IN *SAY GOODBYE TO ILLNESS*, Nambudripad uses the insights of many disciplines--chiropractic, Oriental medicine, immunology, environmental medicine, genetics, and Western physiology and physics--to explain how NAET works. Vastly simplified, her theory is that allergies result from energy blockages in the body "due to contact with adverse energy of other substances."

She explains that when energy is freely flowing along the energy pathways, or meridians as they are called in Chinese medicine, then

"no allergic reaction is possible." Blockages occur because the allergic person's immune system responds to normally harmless substances as if they were a threat to the body. Antigen-antibody complexes are formed with T and B immune cells. Ellen Cutler, who was a student of Nambudripad, says, "When trying to destroy these complexes, the immune system brings about an autoimmune reaction that inflames and destroys healthy tissue."

This inflammatory reaction blocks the energy flow along meridians and thus prevents the movement of vital energy to all the body's organ systems. This, says Nambudripad, can produce an enormous variety of health problems, depending on exactly where the energy is most blocked. Disorders can range from simple tiredness and cloudy thinking to headaches, digestive problems, depression, skin rashes, and eventually diseases of the kidney liver, lungs, and other organs. When NAET is performed, these blockages are released, and most importantly, the body is reprogrammed to not react to the substance as if it were a threat. In turn, energy blockages caused by food allergies cease, and the symptoms caused by the blockages disappear.

Cutler explains in her book *Winning the War against Asthma & Allergies* (Delmar Publishers, 1997), that when the areas along the spine are stimulated while a person is holding an allergen, "a chemical or enzymatic change occurs, neutralizing the immune mediators and interrupting the allergen or antigen-antibody complex reaction." This, she says, clears the energy blockage and sends a message to the brain that this is not an allergen.

Because it takes two hours for energy to make its journey through each of the body's 12 meridians, it takes 24 hours for this energy, called qi in Chinese medicine, to circulate through all the meridians. NAET practitioners make sure that the blockage has cleared by requiring patients to avoid the food for 25 hours.

It's not impossible to believe that clearing blocked meridians can free energy to move along these pathways. But it's less easy to imagine that doing acupuncture on points along the spine while a patient holds an offending substance, such as a carrot, can somehow reprogram the body to know that a molecule of carrot is not really a threat.

Proponents explain that when an allergen is held within an allergic person's energy field while acupuncture is done, the energy begins its circuit of the body on a freely flowing path that it had not experienced during previous exposure to that substance. The body relearns how to respond to it.

The question most people ask is why the body misinterprets a carrot as a threat in the first place. Cutler points out that the probability of being predisposed to a food allergy climbs if your parents were allergic to that food. However, other factors play important roles, too, especially poor digestion, which can trigger allergies in people who are genetically predisposed to them. Digestive weaknesses can occur for many reasons, including a lack of necessary digestive

enzymes or vitamins and minerals, ingestion of antibiotics, chronic stress, and the consumption of foods whose large protein molecules are hard to digest, such as dairy products.

Who Has NAET Helped?

NAET REMAINS OBSCURE for two reasons: One, the theory of how it works is hard for most people to accept; and two, no controlled studies have documented that it works. The reason it's become as popular as it has--and why it could revolutionize allergy care--is that doctors and their patients are swearing it's helped. In four years of using NAET to treat close to one thousand patients, the success rate reported by Bellevue, Wash. osteopathic physician Ann McCombs is roughly the same as that of other doctors who use it--between 80 and 90 percent of her patients become "symptom-free."

Robert Sampson, M.D., co-author of *Breaking Out of Environmental Illness* (Bear & Company, 1997), runs an alternative healing practice in Andover, Mass., for patients suffering from environmental illness and allergies and chronic fatigue syndrome. He uses NAET to treat 90 percent of his patients.

"We don't have the staff to keep statistics," says Sampson, "but to the best of my knowledge I would say that NAET has entirely relieved allergy symptoms or produced satisfactory improvement in 80 to 90 percent of our patients. But the individuals must follow through with a series of treatments as opposed to stopping after one or two. We've treated up to 200 patients so far with the technique."

And Cutler, too, who says she has treated hundreds of patients during the seven years she has used NAET, claims an 85 percent success rate in patients who stick with the treatment. Cutler lacks no confidence in NAET. "I'll challenge any doctor. I'll take their patient whose allergies they cannot cure, and I'll get the allergies to go away."

After 16 years of food allergy symptoms that ranged from hives all over her body (including inside her mouth) to extreme digestive disorders, artist Helen Uhl turned to Cutler for NAET treatment one year ago. Uhl, who was weak and emaciated at the time, didn't see an immediate improvement after the basic treatments. Yet she felt enough subtle changes that she was willing to persevere.

"When I started, I was not allergic to halibut, rice, and turkey. But I was allergic to about everything else," she says. "Now, after a year, I can eat everything but milk products. I'm just so grateful to Dr. Cutler that I've gotten this far. I'd recommend NAET to anyone with allergies. For someone seeking help, a solution is out there."

Like many other food allergy sufferers, Diana Gazzolo, a Boston, Mass., executive recruiter, became disillusioned after she consulted several conventional allergists, all of whom were unable to help, let alone cure her. Now over 40, Gazzolo was 13 years old when she first got hives.

"They were welts, and they itched beyond belief," she says. "At the extreme, my eyelids, lips, and my whole face would swell. Every morning when I got out of the shower, I had welts on my body."

An allergist prescribed antihistamines, which made her sleepy. She began altering her diet, which didn't help things, although by doing so she began to discover some of the foods, such as cheeses, yeast, and breads, that were causing her problems. She also tried mind control, willing herself to not itch, which was an uphill battle she predictably lost. Basically, throughout her 20s and 30s, Gazzolo says, "I just lived with it."

Then she discovered Seldane, an antihistamine that doesn't cause drowsiness. She became a Seldane junkie. "As long as I could pop a Seldane, I was fine. Little did I know it was causing my heart to race," she recalls. When she learned of the heart problem, Gazzolo stopped taking the antihistamine. Her allergies then raged out of control, forcing her to often cancel business appointments at the last minute.

Then Gazzolo developed a new symptom: Her throat began closing up, a sign of anaphylactic shock. By the time she arrived at Sampson's office, she told him, "Take my blood out of my body and put it back in again. I don't care, just make me better."

Using muscle-response testing, Sampson found that Gazzolo was allergic to 50 or 60 different substances, many of them foods. But after the first two NAET treatments, her symptoms worsened. "What the hell are you doing?" Gazzolo asked Sampson. He told her that some people get initial reactions like this. "He didn't try to sell me an instant cure," she says. It wasn't until the fourth treatment that Gazzolo saw improvement. "I had fewer hives," she says. "I came in with about 50 at the beginning of treatment and at that point I had 10. By the fifth session they were all gone. When it finally happened, I just cried." After 8 treatment sessions, she was asymptomatic and no longer needed to continue. "I'm like a different person now. The bottom line is that there's hope."

Not every patient treated with NAET for food allergies recovers as quickly, or miraculously, as Gazzolo. Nor can you walk into a practitioner's office and say "Just treat me for chocolate and bananas." NAET practitioners follow the same initial treatment protocol for every patient. Because most allergy sufferers don't know

everything they're allergic to, doctors begin with a series of 10 treatments for the most common allergens. The basic treatments cover various food groups, including egg mix (eggs, chicken, feathers, and tetracycline), calcium mix (goat and cow's milk and substances such as casein and albumin contained in milk), vitamin C mix (ascorbic acid, bioflavonoids, and fruits and vegetables containing vitamin C), and seven other food categories. "By the time most people finish with the basics," Cutler says, "many of their food allergies have cleared up."

"It Saved My Life"

Valerie Lauterbach, a Los Altos Hills, Calif. engineer and mother of a 3-year-old, is another Cutler patient. Lauterbach says she literally owes her life to NAET Three years ago, for the first time in her life, Lauterbach suffered a sudden allergic reaction to dried apricots that sent her into anaphylactic shock.

"My tongue started to swell up and my throat started to close," she says. "I immediately went to the emergency room and they gave me shots of epinephrine as well as prednisone. They told me that if I had gotten there 10 minutes later, I would have been dead."

She soon found out that sulfites, used to preserve foods, caused the reaction. She tried avoiding them, but still had many close calls because of inaccurate food labels and not knowing the content of foods in restaurants. Then she realized she was becoming allergic to other foods.

"By last August, the only things I could eat were chicken, beef, and some fish, salmon in particular," Lauterbach says. "That's all I ate for a few months. But sometimes my husband would come home from work and kiss me, and I would have a reaction to something he ate. I just had to get it on my lips."

She sought treatment from a nutritional medicine doctor who gave her megavitamins, but who ultimately wasn't able to help her. She then considered a promising form of treatment known as Enzyme Potentiated Desensitization (EPD). EPD is a series of intradermal, skin injections followed by a one-week diet that eliminates all foods the patient may be allergic to. Lauterbach eventually ruled out the injections because the doctor recommending them insisted she eat a wider variety of foods and use Benadryl to control her anaphylactic reactions. The Benadryl made her sleepy, and she was unwilling to knowingly eat something that would impair her breathing and risk killing her. That's when she decided to try NAET.

Despite the fact that Lauterbach landed in the emergency room once or twice from unexpected reactions during the first months of NAET treatment, she persisted. Little by little, she was able to reintroduce former trigger foods into her diet.

"It was really a turning point once I could eat vegetables again. Before that, I thought I couldn't live like this. Now I eat vegetables, yogurt, butter, nuts, and meats. I can probably tolerate more foods, but I'm still afraid to try," says Lauterbach, who is continuing once-a-week treatments.

"Amazing" Muscle Testing

Although it's widely accepted as a diagnostic tool among chiropractors, it's hard to fathom how pushing against someone's arm can reveal what foods we're allergic to. The former behavioral science coordinator for Madigan Army Medical Center's department

of family practice and a lecturer who demonstrates muscle-response testing to audiences, Robin Carter, D.C.S.W, says that muscle testing works because the physical body, in sometimes dramatic ways, can respond to extremely subtle changes in energy fields.

In April 1997, Carter demonstrated muscle testing to a group of more than one hundred physicians, mostly M.D.s, at a conference in Denver that was billed as "the scientific basis for holistic medicine." Carter explained that many things can affect the body's energy fields and cause muscles to become strong or weak. To make his point, Carter showed the doctors how even more dubious energy fields--those carried by symbols--also weaken or strengthen the body's muscular system. Most of the doctors were suspicious as Carter began his demonstrations. Some chuckled when he explained that he could weaken someone's arm muscle by placing a swastika against the person's body, even though the person didn't know what the symbol was. Carter proceeded to test many different symbols on a number of doctors in the audience. Some stepped forward to prove to themselves that this was a simple matter of the mind playing tricks with the body. But one by one they returned to their seats muttering or shaking their heads in disbelief.

Jerry Aldhizer, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of internal medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., was one of the conference participants. "I'd never seen anything like this before," said Aldhizer. "I think the use of symbols was the most amazing thing. Robin would turn a cross upside down, and the person would lose all power in the outstretched arm. With the cross right side up, the arm was strong again. He repeated this with the same person several times. Afterwards, everyone in the audience definitely believed."

Experiencing is Believing

Like many of the people I talked to while researching this story, I too had slogged through allergy hell by the time I discovered NAET and decided to make an appointment with Cutler. I've had an array of what individually might be considered minor symptoms--everything from a flushed, itchy face and scalp to nasal congestion, digestive irregularities, extreme fatigue, foggy thinking, memory lapses, and cravings for sweets that have led to a recent 20-pound weight gain. But the cumulative effect has felt anything but minor. Conventional doctors, who claimed they couldn't help me because my reactions to foods didn't fit the classic definition of food allergies, told me simply to avoid all the foods I reacted to. But that, I felt, would be impossible, since I seemed to have become sensitive to more than a hundred different foods.

Cutler turned out to be a dynamic woman who, unlike many doctors who are asked to treat food allergies, knew exactly how I suffered. After all, she'd seen hundreds of people like me and had experienced food allergies herself for years.

Although most practitioners still rely on muscle testing for diagnosis, Cutler now uses a new computerized electroacupuncture device. It

consists of a metal cylinder (attached by wire to a computer), which the doctor wets and places in the palm of the patient's hand, and another device that looks like a fat metal pen, also wired to the computer, with which the doctor touches an acupuncture point on a finger of the patient's other hand. Cutler uses this because with it she can test hundreds of foods in one session without a patient's arm becoming tired.

When Cutler printed out the foods my body could not tolerate, including chemical additives and food colorings, I couldn't believe that the single-spaced list ran a whopping three pages. For someone who lives to eat rather than eats to live, the thought that so many foods were off-limits to me seemed intolerable. Cutler, however, was confident NAET would help me. I decided to go forward with her program.

By the time I completed the basic 10, which took four weeks with dime appointments per week my severe digestive problems were nearly gone, and I was able to eat carrots, muffins, polenta, and peanut butter, all of which had previously triggered major reactions.

At one point I began to wonder whether the 25-hour diets had to be so rigorous. In order to avoid certain food substances, the patient may be required to eliminate nearly everything from her diet for those 25 hours. For the B-complex treatment, for example, I was reduced to eating Jello, tapioca cooked in water, and if I wanted, Cool Whip. Those were the only foods Cutler identified that had no B-vitamins. But what if I waited only 23 hours? Or what if I ate something that wasn't on the diet? I quickly got my answer. The first time I cheated, I needed to repeat the treatment.

Once we'd finished the basic treatments, Cutler retested all the food groups on the EAV machine. An amazing number of foods had "cleared," including corn, wheat, and most other grains. Unfortunately, I couldn't muster too much excitement because the list was still a page long and I continued to experience itching, the most annoying and frustrating of all my symptoms. In fact, the itching had grown far worse than it had been when I started treatment. After Cutler had eliminated some of my worst allergies, I had begun reacting to substances I had previously not been allergic to, a phenomenon known as "unmasking." I began having strong reactions to foods, food supplements, and herbs I was accustomed to taking regularly. And I had to repeat one treatment five or six times because it wouldn't hold. Meanwhile I itched. It was my darkest hour.

Soon after that, everything changed. Once I got through the treatment for bioflavonoids, most of the itching stopped. And in the past month I've raced through the list of foods I'm allergic to and crossed each item off after treatment.

But the big revelation has been the physical and emotional changes. I feel better than I have in years. I'm no longer exhausted all the time, nor do I feel hungry most of the day. I have fewer food cravings and they're less intense. And when I indulge them, I'm

satisfied with smaller portions and sometimes even just a taste. I also used to walk through life with a vague fog bank of depression floating above me. I'm not sure when that cloud lifted, but it definitely has. Although I still have some treatments to go before I'm done, the end, I can clearly see, is in sight.

RELATED ARTICLE: Muscle Test Yourself

THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEST THAT SOME PRACTITIONERS SAY YOU CAN DO ON YOURSELF TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE ALLERGIC TO A SUBSTANCE.

First, do a baseline test by forming a circle, an O-ring, with the index finger and thumb of one hand. Then insert the index finger of your other hand into the ring and try to pull it apart where the thumb and index finger meet. This tells you the degree of strength before testing a substance. Now dab onto the palm of your hand and a small amount of a substance you want to test (maybe a drop of milk, or soda). If it's a solid substance, like a piece of bread, break off a tiny piece and hold it in the palm with your little finger. Now try to pull the O-ring apart again. If the ring is as strong as it was for the baseline test, you are not allergic to the substance. If you can pull it apart, you have tested positive for allergies to that substance.

RELATED ARTICLE: RESOURCES

BOOKS

WINNING THE WAR AGAINST ASTHMA & ALLERGIES by Dr. Ellen Cutler, D.C., Delmar Publishers, 1998, \$13.95. To order, call 800-842-3636.

SAY GOODBYE TO ILLNESS by Dr. Devi Nambudripad, D.C., L.Ac., R.N., Ph.D., Delta Publishing Company, 1993, \$40. To order, call 714-523-2933.

BREAKING OUT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ILLNESS by Robert Sampson M.D., and Patricia Hughes, B. S.N., Bear & Company, 1997, \$14. To order, call 800-932-3277.

TO FIND A PRACTITIONER

Dr. Cutler's book (see above) lists 200 U.S. and Canadian NAET practitioners by state and province. Also, the following web site has a searchable directory of practitioners by geographic area:

<http://www.naet.com>

FOR INFORMATION OR NAET SEMINARS

Call 714-523-8900, or write to the following: Naumbudripad Allergy Research and Relief Foundation, 614 Beach Boulevard, Buena Park, CA 90621.

For information on Dr. Ellen Cutler's "Winning the War" workshops,

call 415-927-0741.

Linda Weber is a freelance writer in San Francisco.

COPYRIGHT 1998 Weider Publications
in association with The Gale Group and LookSmart. COPYRIGHT 2000
Gale Group
