



Patient Information- Allergy Shots

Immunotherapy, or allergy shots, are used to help people manage their moderate to severe allergy symptoms. We usually use immunotherapy after patients have tried and failed avoidance and medication therapies. The main goal is desensitize the body to the offending allergy. This is done by injecting very small amounts of the allergen into the body at regular intervals to help the body to realize that this allergen is not-so-bad after all. Most immunotherapy will be for 3-5 years. The goal is for the body to develop the ability to maintain a quality of life by the end of the term that is comfortable and safe for you to stop immunotherapy.

How often will I need to come in for my shots?

In the beginning you could come in 1-2 times weekly depending on how your provider writes your orders. We start at low doses and slowly increase over time. It is important that you do not miss doses as we will need to back up the schedule for times you are not able to attend appointments. As you progress, you will reach a maintenance dose that could mean you come to see us one time every couple of weeks. We make adjustments in your dosing schedule based on the reactions your body has to your immunotherapy. For example, if you have a larger reaction to your shot during the season where there is a lot of pollen in the air, we will make an adjustment for that.

Can I give my own shots?

Since there is a risk associated with administering too much antigen at one time and potential for severe reaction, we do not allow our patients to self administer their allergy shots. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule but it is strongly recommended that you call our office to schedule a time for your allergy injection before coming to see us. You will also need to wait in the clinic for 20-30 minutes after your shot to ensure you do not have a severe reaction.

Do allergy shots hurt?

Allergy shots are given subcutaneously. This means that it is a small needle not far under the skin. We typically use the back of the arm for our injection site. Most people tolerate this without difficulty and have no concerns.

You could see a reddened area that may become swollen and itchy. This is okay and considered a normal reaction. Please contact the clinic if the size of the area becomes larger than a silver

dollar or does not go away after 24 hours. You could take an antihistamine to help with itching. You can take Tylenol or ibuprofen for pain. You can also use an ice pack if needed.

Please make sure you let the nursing staff know of any unusual reaction you had to a shot before you get the next dose. We may not want to advance you to the next dose until your body adjusts to the current dose.

Can I have my shot if I am pregnant?

There is evidence to suggest that you can continue to receive you allergy shots while you are pregnant. You will want to discuss option with your provider to determine the best dosing schedule while you are pregnant and we may decide not to continue to advance your dosing until you are post partum.

Are there medications I should not take while on immunotherapy?

Medications called beta-blockers should not be taken at the same time you are taking allergy shots. These are typically used to treat high blood pressure, glaucoma, irregular heart rates, tremors, panic attacks, thyroid disease, and migraine headaches. Please see the Medication Guide on our website for a list of common beta-blockers.

What is a systemic reaction?

A local reaction happens when there is a change in the area around the injection site on your skin. It is limited to the area on your arm where you were given your shot.

A systemic reaction involves more of your body, such as your respiratory system. You could experience itching, rash, nasal congestion that is not close to your injection area. You could have trouble breathing or wheezing. You might have a change in your heart rate or tightness in your chest. This will typically occur within 30 minutes of your injection if it is going to happen. There have been instances of delayed reactions but this is rare. Any reaction that is more than 24 hours after your injection is most likely not related to your allergy shot.

If you have a systemic reaction, you should use your EpiPen and seek emergency assistance. You can also have Benedryl or something similar as an antihistamine.