



Patient Information- Sublingual Immunotherapy (SLIT)

Sublingual Immunotherapy (SLIT) is a type of immunotherapy similar to allergy injections that does not involve shots. You may also hear these called Oral Immunotherapy or Allergy Drops. Patients take their allergen daily via drops under the tongue. The two therapy types have similar goals in that they are used to desensitize the body's immune response to specific allergens. SLIT is not available for as many kinds of allergen as subcutaneous immunotherapy (SCIT).

How does this work?

Patients complete their allergy testing and work with their provider to determine if SLIT is a good option for them. If so, the clinic will mix your SLIT vials for you to take home for administration. You will work through your building period within 7-14 days and begin maintenance dosing after that. Patients are instructed to drop a specified number of drops of antigen under their tongue daily. They will hold the drops under the tongue to 2 minutes and then swallow. Initial doses and newly mixed vials will require the patient to remain in the clinic for 30 minutes for monitoring. You will be given a dosing schedule to take home with you so you can safely advance your dosing at home. Expect to take your drops for about a year to determine efficacy and 3-5 years to obtain best results for desensitization.

Why doesn't everyone do this?

SLIT is a great option for those patients who have allergies to airborne allergens (pollens, pets, dust mites, etc). There are some allergens that are not able to be made into SLIT formulations.

People who are taking beta-blockers can not participate in SLIT. Patients with eosinophilic esophagitis are not good candidates for SLIT. Patients with poorly controlled asthma may be asked to wait or consider other options until their asthma is better controlled. Patients who are pregnant should not start SLIT. Those who become pregnant while on SLIT therapy will be asked to remain at their current dosing until they have delivered their new baby.

Patients who live on the outskirts of our area, have difficulty getting into the clinic frequently, do not care for shots, or have trouble getting time off work/ school may want to consider this option. The drawback is that most insurance companies do not cover the cost of SLIT at this time unless it is in the form of tablets for grass, ragweed, or dust mites (and this may require a prior authorization). This is because SLIT drops are an off label service that is not FDA approved in the United States yet. As a result, patients will need to pay the costs of preparation of

allergens. When weighed against expenses and time constraints mentioned above, this may be worth consideration.

What are the side effects?

Most side effects are mild and include itching of the lips or mouth a few minutes to hours after you take your drops. This should lessen as you move through your dosing schedule. You can take an antihistamine to help with this and recommend that you take a daily antihistamine for the first several weeks of therapy until you reach your maintenance dose.

Moderate side effects are rare but include swelling in the lips and/or eyes, itchy nose/ eyes, nasal congestion, sneezing, hives, abdominal issues (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping), wheezing, cough, and shortness of breath.

Very rarely, severe reactions such a drop in blood pressure have happened. There have been no know fatalities to SLIT.

Eosinophilic esophagitis is rare but could result from drops. This is a “rash” or reaction to your drops inside your esophagus. You may notice signs of heartburn or have some trouble swallowing. These are not permanent and you should see them resolve by stopping SLIT.

Please contact your provider with additional questions or concerns.

Grande Ronde Hospital ENT Clinic