



## **Immunotherapy**

### **What Is An Allergy Injection Or “Immunotherapy”?**

It is a series of regular injections of allergens (pollens, mold, dust, etc.) that you showed a sensitivity to on your recent skin tests. Your serum is a “prescription” designed specifically for you to build up your protective antibodies.

### **How Will Allergy Injections Help Me?**

Your injections will help build up your immunity to these allergens over a period of time and reduce your symptoms. The body system that produces allergic antibodies may become inactive or turned off.

### **How Soon Will I See Improvement In My Symptoms?**

Some relief of symptoms may be seen after only a few months of immunotherapy – more commonly there is a gradual improvement over one to two years of consistent allergy injections.

### **How Often Do I Have To Get Injections?**

While building up to your maintenance dose (your maximum therapeutic dose) you will need to come in at least once a week. The number of injections needed to reach maintenance varies from patient to patient depending on each individual’s reaction to the injections. The minimum number is 32 injections. When you reach your maintenance dose, the time between injections will gradually be increased to three to four weeks, as tolerated.

Because the antigens in older bottles lose their potency, the dosage will be reduced when you start a new refill bottle. You will need to build back to maintenance.

### **Why Do I Have To Wait In The Office At Least 30 Minutes After Each Allergy Injection?**

After about 30 minutes the nurse will check your injection site. A small local reaction such as redness, swelling, itching, and heat is expected and may last up to 24 hours. Serious reactions are unusual, but occasionally occur. This usually happens within 30 minutes after your injection. This is why we have you wait in the University Health Center where medical equipment and trained personnel are readily available.

### **What Do I Do If My Arm Becomes Red Or Swollen From The Allergy Injection After I Leave The Clinic?**

If the reaction is just a large red bump at the injection site, you may treat it yourself. Put ice on it, take an antihistamine by mouth (even if already taken), and remember to tell the nurse about it at the next allergy injection visit.

### **What Are The Symptoms Of A Systemic Reaction To The Shot’s:**

Symptoms of a “systemic reaction” include any of the following: itchy skin (other than the site of the injection); itchy ears, throat, feet, hands; sneezing; coughing; wheezing; or hives. These symptoms may develop from the time of the injection up to several hours after the injection. However, if one is going to experience a systemic reaction, it will most likely be within the first 20 minutes from the time of the injection. Although we have never had a fatal reaction from an injection, or even a systemic reaction that has required hospitalization, this has been reported in medical literature.

### **What Do I Do If I Get Systemic Symptoms After I Leave The Office Following An Allergy Injection?**

Take an antihistamine by mouth and either return to the University Health Center, call and talk to a nurse or doctor or go to an emergency room immediately. We would like you to do this even if you are not sure if your symptoms are related to the injection. It is important that you always carry antihistamine with you when you are receiving allergy injections.

### **Do I Need To Make An Appointment To Get My Allergy Injections?**

No. Allergy injections are given at the University Health Center between 8:00–11:30AM and 1:00-4:00PM Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Tuesday from 9:00-11:30AM and 1:00-4:00PM.

### **What If I Am Overdue For My Injections?**

If you are building up to maintenance and it has been more than 13 days since your last injection, you may not advance and the last dose given will be repeated. If it has been over 3 weeks, your dose will be dropped back to a previously given dose.

If you are on your maintenance dose and it has been more than 4 weeks since your last injection, your dose will be dropped and you will need to come in at least once a week to build back up to maintenance.

All immunotherapy patients having a lapse of over 6 weeks will need to schedule an appointment with Dr. Buck to evaluate progress and to determine a re-starting dose.

### **How Long Will I Be On Allergy Injections?**

The length of time depends on your body's response to this treatment. The effectiveness may depend on the regularity in getting injections. You can expect to remain on allergy injections for a minimum of three to five years. A follow-up evaluation will help Dr. Buck determine this.

### **How Often Do I Need To See The Doctor For Follow-Up Appointments?**

All patients need to see the doctor when they reach maintenance, for evaluation of their progress. **All Patients Must See the Allergist at Least Once a Year.**

### **How Do Medications Affect My Allergy Injections?**

Medication does not alter the effectiveness of your allergy injections. Continue taking your medications as the doctor has advised. Please notify us of any new medications you have started. **The use of certain medications (“Beta Blockers”) is not safe while on allergy injections.**

**Please Tell Us If You Become Pregnant or Start A New Medication**