

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ALLERGY SHOTS

### **WHAT IS IMMUNOTHERAPY?**

Immunotherapy is a medical treatment involving a series of injections with gradually increasing doses of an extract made from the allergens to which you are allergic.

### **IS EVERY INNUMOTHERAPY PATIENT ON THE SAME PRESCRIPTION?**

No. The allergy extracts prescription is specifically designed for you, based on an evaluation of your symptoms, physical findings and allergy testing. It is highly unlikely two allergy patients will be on precisely the same extract prescription.

### **WHAT CONDITIONS ARE TREATED WITH IMMUNOTHERAPY?**

Immunotherapy is a preventative treatment for allergic respiratory conditions such as perennial and seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever) and asthma (wheezing).

### **WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF IMMUNOTHERAPY?**

The primary goal is to relieve symptoms caused by allergies. Immunotherapy should generally reduce allergic sensitivities, thereby reducing symptoms and reducing the need for medications. It is not a cure for the condition, but it usually will improve many of the symptoms and complications of allergic disease.

### **HOW EFFECTIVE IS IMMUNOTHERAPY?**

Generally, 85% to 90% of patients receiving high dose-maintenance immunotherapy have a significant reduction in their symptoms, as well as a reduction in their need for additional medications.

### **SHOULD I TAKE ALLERGY MEDICATIONS WHILE I AM RECEIVING ALLERGY INJECTIONS?**

There is no interference between allergy medications and injections. As you begin immunotherapy, you should continue your prescribed medications because immunotherapy takes time to become effective. As you near your "maintenance" immunotherapy, you may find the need for medications will decrease and you may be able to gradually reduce or discontinue some medications. Always speak to your doctor before reducing asthma medications.

### **WHY CAN'T I GIVE THE INJECTIONS TO MYSELF AT HOME?**

Injections contain potent doses of allergens to which you are allergic. No matter how long you have been receiving injections, the potential always exists for you to have a serious (and possibly life-threatening) allergic reaction. Therefore, you must receive your injections in a physician's office where emergency treatment is available.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT MY INJECTIONS WHEN I GO ON VACATION?**

You can skip your injections while on vacation if you will be gone less than 3 weeks. Missing a week or two will not have a serious impact on the overall immunotherapy program. If you plan an extended trip, notify the office staff and we will arrange transfer of your extract to a local physician at your destination.

### **WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR POSTPONING AN ALLERGY SHOT?**

Call us at least 2 hours before the allergy shot appointment if you are ill or not feeling well. For example, a fever or wheezing. These may be reasons to put off getting your allergy shot.

### **DO I HAVE TO REMAIN IN THE OFFICE FOR 20 MINUTES AFTER MY ALLERGY SHOT?**

There is always the risk that you could have a reaction to your allergy shot, no matter how long you have been on immunotherapy. These reactions can be life-threatening; a physician should be readily available. If you cannot wait after you injection that day, then please reschedule.

### **WHAT TYPES OF REACTIONS OR SIDE EFFECTS MIGHT RESULT FROM AN ALLERGY SHOT?**

Allergy shots usually cause no immediate problems. The only common side effect is localized swelling at the injection site, usually no bigger than a quarter. Applying hydrocortisone cream or ice may help decrease some of the discomfort. Benadryl also may help avoid this side effect. Do not scratch or massage the injection site as it may worsen the reaction. Contact our office if local reaction is bigger than half dollar size.

Major flare up symptoms include: Chest congestion or wheezing, Hives, swelling of tongue or throat, light-headedness and abdominal cramping. If any of these symptoms occur after receiving your allergy shot, use your epi pen if you have one. If not, then go to the emergency room for help and contact our office.