

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do all serious reactions occur within 30 minutes?

The vast majority of serious reactions do occur within 30 minutes, but they have occurred as late as several hours after the injection. If you have any symptoms of an allergic reaction occurring after you have left the office, you should immediately seek medical assistance.

How long before I'll see benefits from immunotherapy?

It may take six months or more to receive benefit. Increasing benefit often occurs over the first two years of therapy.

How long will I be on weekly injections?

The schedule will vary according to your condition and your physician's directions. However, in general, people receive injections, through the first several vials, once or twice weekly, and this often takes four months, or so. At that point, the injections are then spaced out to the maintenance dosing of monthly.

How long will the vials last?

The initial vials contain a more dilute concentration of the allergen and are very "labile." This means they do not last very long. The initial silver vial, for example, lasts less than eight weeks. Therefore, it is very important, once the decision to begin immunotherapy is made and the vials are prepared, that you start your immunotherapy right away. Otherwise they may have to be remixed at additional charge. The more concentrated solutions have a much longer duration, or shelf life, of up to a year.

How often may I come in for injections?

Typically, one to two injections per week are allowed. These injections should be spaced such that at least 48 hours elapses between injections. For example, Monday/Wed or Thursday and Tuesday/Thursday or Friday. Note that our office is not open Fridays for injections.

May I get my injections at another doctor's office? Do I have to start here, at Allergy and Asthma Associates?

We do prefer that allergy injections be administered in our office, so that we can be certain that the dosing regimen is followed. We also have a lot of experience with managing the allergy injections. However, we recognize that this is not always practical or convenient. You should contact your physician's office and determine whether they are able to provide the immunotherapy under our direction.

Should I continue my medications while I am on immunotherapy?

Yes, you should continue your medications, as directed, by your doctor. As immunotherapy progresses, you may find that the disorder or disease for which you are being treated improves, and it may be possible to reduce your medications. This should be done, however, in conjunction with advice from your doctor.

What happens if I go on vacation?

If you are on a routine dosing of weekly, you may receive an injection before you go away at the end of the week, and then receive it again when you return on the following week. If the injection schedule interval is longer, then there is even more flexibility with dosing.

How will I know when my immunotherapy is ready?

Once the consent form has been completed and all questions, regarding immunotherapy, have been answered to your satisfaction, we will call you to tell you the extract is available, and schedule your first appointment.

Why do I need to have more than one injection?

Depending on your allergies, you may be sensitive to many different substances, which cannot be combined in a single vial. Often, to reach an adequate potency to provide the best treatment, several vials may be necessary. Therefore, if you are receiving treatment for pollens, animal danders, mold and dust mite, it may be necessary to provide treatment in two, or even three, vial sets.

Facts Regarding Allergy Immunotherapy

- Allergy immunotherapy is a form of therapy, which can help reduce the sensitivity of persons who have allergic disease
- Immunotherapy may prevent symptoms from occurring, prevent additional sensitizations from taking place, and also may reduce the risk of developing asthma
- Immunotherapy must be received routinely, as scheduled, without interruption to maximize benefit and to reduce the chance of allergic or adverse reactions
- Immunotherapy is typically prescribed for three to five years, in some cases longer. Many patients do not see a benefit immediately, rather taking a few months to develop, with increasing improvement over the first two years of therapy
- Immunotherapy begins with a dilute concentration with progressively increasing doses
- In order to build through these doses, you would receive injections one or two times a week
- When you reach your maintenance dose, the interval between injections will be increased, typically to monthly injections
- It typically takes approximately 25 injections to reach the maintenance dosing
- The first vial must be used within 8 weeks of being made, so immunotherapy should begin immediately after the vials are mixed. Delays may require remixing the vials at additional charge
- Allergic reactions may occur. There are two types of reactions. Local and generalized.
- Take an antihistamine on day of injection to reduce local reactions
- More significant would be generalized or severe systemic allergic reactions. This is a reaction that might involve generalized symptoms, involving the skin, heart, lungs, or abdominal systems. Symptoms might include hives, trouble breathing, difficulty swallowing, or loss of consciousness
- You must remain at the facility where injection is given for 30 minutes after the injection to be monitored
- An auto-injectable epinephrine device must be available to you for at least 6 hours following the injection should a delayed allergic reaction occur
- Do not receive an injection if you are feeling ill, have a fever, or are overheated
- It is very important that you do not receive an injection if you have asthma and it is not controlled. Report if you have had an increase in your asthma symptoms and/or are needing your rescue inhaler
- For best results, you should receive your injections on schedule. If you are going to be away for any extended period of time, arrangements will need to be made to receive your immunotherapy elsewhere
- Please notify the nurse or physician if you are taking any new medicines while you are on immunotherapy, especially a class of medicines known as beta-blockers or ACE inhibitors. These may interfere with treating allergic reactions should they occur. They are often used to treat high blood pressure, migraines, heart problems
- Once you are receiving allergy shots monthly, you are expected to see your allergist on a regular basis; at least once a year if you have allergies, or more frequently, if you also have asthma
- VENOM IMMUNOTHERAPY
 - Similar to inhalant allergy immunotherapy, sting insect venom immunotherapy consists of administering gradually increasing doses of the venoms to which you are sensitive, until you receive a dose similar to the amount of venom in a natural field sting. At this "maintenance" dose you should have protection against a generalized reaction to insect stings. The initial doses are administered weekly. Once a maintenance dose is reached the interval between injections is increased to monthly. Annual revisits are required. At these visits adjustments may be made. Often the interval between injections can be advanced by 2 weeks increments every year. A course of treatment is typically 5 years total. In more severe reactions it may be a lifetime treatment