



ALLERGEN IMMUNOTHERAPY

PURPOSE

Your individualized course of allergy shots (immunotherapy) is designed to decrease your allergic sensitivities. The vast majority of allergic patients (80-90%) will experience substantial reductions in their symptoms over time (months to years). Many also reduce or eliminate the need for other medications. Together with avoidance of offending allergens and medication allergy shots represent one of the recommended treatments for allergic rhinitis, allergic conjunctivitis, atopic dermatitis and asthma. Allergy shots are not useful for food/drug allergies or non-allergic conditions like infections.

TREATMENT DURATION

The length of a treatment course varies on a case by case basis but in general a course requires 3 to 5 years of maintenance treatment for completion. Initially there is a build-up phase where the injections are given more frequently but as the High Dose, or maintenance dose, is reached the frequency of injections may be adjusted. The total duration of therapy can vary considerably from patient to patient. During your treatment you will be re-evaluated frequently by your physician. These visits will occur at least annually.

SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTRATION

Your series of injections begins at a low dose selected by your physician based on your skin test results and history. Over time the shots build gradually until you reach your High Dose. This High Dose is called the maintenance dose and you will stay on it for the duration of your treatment course unless it is changed by your physician. Maintenance therapy can be continued if you are pregnant BUT notify your OAAC physician when you become pregnant.

The build-up phase of the allergy shots can occur in different formats. Your physician will help you decide which is right for you. Most common is the weekly building schedule. Various accelerated schedules include: 2 or 3 time a week shots, clusters of several shots given on the same day and finally RUSH therapy where many injections are given on one day and then weekly shots follow until you are at your High Dose. RUSH therapy is associated with significantly more side effects (see below) and is not for every patient. However, it does bring you to the High Dose level in a month rather than slowly over many months. This is an advantage for some patients.

SAFETY

All allergy shots carry some risks for severe anaphylactic reactions. Therefore the injections need to be administered in a medical facility under medical supervision on a regular basis. Weekly or twice weekly shots from our clinic carry a risk of anaphylaxis of 0.015 to 0.02% of injections compared to nationally published risks of 0.1 to 0.3% of injections. RUSH therapy carries a nationally published risk of almost 40% of shots whereas our RUSH risk is closer to 10% of injections. This marked increase in risk however makes RUSH therapy unacceptable for many patients.