



ARKANSAS ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC, PA

A Tradition of Quality Patient Care Since 1930

IMMUNOTHERAPY (ALLERGY INJECTIONS)

PURPOSE

Allergy injections are used to decrease your sensitivity to allergy-causing substances so that exposure to the offending allergens (pollens, dust, molds, venoms, etc.) will result in fewer symptoms. This does not mean that allergy shots are a substitute for avoidance of the known allergens which is the treatment of choice. Allergy injections have been shown to lead to the formation of blocking or protective antibodies and a gradual decrease in the allergy antibody level. These changes may permit you to tolerate exposure to the allergens with fewer symptoms. You, in effect become protected from the allergens. The amount of this desensitization occurs to a different extent for each person.

EFFICACY

Improvement should not be expected immediately. It usually develops gradually over 9 to 12 months. About 90% of allergic individuals on injections get significant improvement of their symptoms, but may not go away completely.

PROCEDURE AND DURATION OF TREATMENT

Allergy injections are begun at a very low dose. The dose is gradually increased on a regular basis (usually once or twice weekly) until a therapeutic dose ("maintenance dose") is reached. This frequency reduces the chance of reactions and permits the maintenance dose to be reached in a reasonable amount of time. This usually takes approximately six to nine months if there are no problems along the way and shots are received on a regular basis. Maintenance doses are usually given every two weeks and the goal is to eventually spread the injections out to every four weeks over a period of several years. Allergy shots should not be started if it is anticipated that they cannot be taken regularly. Injections may be discontinued if visits are frequently missed due to the increased risk of reactions.

REACTIONS TO IMMUNOTHERAPY

Local reactions (redness, warmth, swelling, itching, or tenderness at the site of the injection) may occur in most patients receiving injections and usually subside in a day or so. Large local reactions and generalized (systemic) reactions may occur in 1-5% of patients receiving allergy injections and usually occur during the build-up phase, although they can occur at any time during the course of treatment. These reactions necessitate a dosage adjustment. These generalized reactions may include, but are not limited to, any and all of the following: itchy eyes, nose, or throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, tightness in the throat or chest, coughing, or wheezing. Some may experience lightheadedness, faintness, drop in blood pressure, nausea and vomiting, hives, and under extreme conditions, shock. A severe systemic reaction potentially can be fatal, but this is most unusual.

Allergy injections should be administered at a medical facility with a physician present since occasional reactions may require immediate therapy. Any medical facility that gives allergy injections should be equipped to treat any reaction that may occur. You should check with the facility to be certain that this is the case. You must wait at least 20 minutes after each injection in the medical facility so that in the unlikely event of a generalized reaction you can be quickly treated and kept under observation, thereby decreasing the likelihood of a more severe reaction.

TREATMENT OF REACTIONS

Simple local reactions that consist of swelling of the arm, redness or tenderness at the site of the injection are best handled with simple measures such as local cold compress or the use of medications such as an antihistamine, ASA, or Tylenol. At the first sign of a systemic reaction, Adrenalin (Epinephrine) is usually given to counteract the reaction. Severe reactions that include chest symptoms are treated the same way any asthmatic attack would be treated. **If, after you leave the medical facility, you experience a generalized reaction from an allergy injection, please either return to the medical facility or proceed to the nearest emergency room.** Before additional injections are given or for questions or assistance, please call Arkansas Allergy & Asthma Clinic, P.A. at (501) 227-5210 or 1-800-256-5844.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RECEIVING ALLERGY INJECTIONS

Injection Hours	Little Rock Office 10310 West Markham, Ste. 222 Little Rock, AR 72205 (501) 227-5210 • 1-800-256-5844	Conway Office 400 Salem Road, Ste. 4 Conway, AR 72034 (501) 329-0237
Monday	7:30 am – 5:45 pm	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday	7:30 am – 4:45 pm	9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Wednesday	7:30 am – 11:45 am	– CLOSED –
Thursday	7:30 am – 4:45 pm	9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Friday	7:30 am – 4:45 pm	– CLOSED –

INTERVAL BETWEEN INJECTIONS: Initially injections can be given every two to eight days, unless otherwise stated by the nurse. Once a maintenance dose is reached, injections are usually given every two weeks.

WAITING PERIOD: All patients should wait their allotted time (usually 20 minutes) after receiving their injection. The nurse or receptionist should check the injection site before the patient leaves the waiting room. Patients not waiting their allotted time will assume the responsibility of recognizing reaction symptoms.

MINOR PATIENTS: Minor patients should not be dropped off and left alone to receive allergy injections. This is in case an emergency should occur with the minor patient. **NOTE:** Patients who are licensed drivers are allowed to receive allergy injections without an adult present.

LOCAL REACTIONS: Local reactions of redness, swelling, itching, warmth and slight discomfort may occur at the injection site. Redness and swelling up to two inches in diameter is considered normal. Any redness/swelling in excess of that should be reported either by calling our office or when checking in at the front desk **BEFORE** the next injection.

SYSTEMIC REACTION: Within the first few minutes or hours after the injection, any generalized, sudden increase in allergy symptoms such as itching of the scalp, palm, feet, or throat should be reported **IMMEDIATELY**.

PLEASE NOTE: We ask all patients to refrain from wearing strong perfumes and colognes due to patient sensitivity to various odors.

NO INJECTION CRITERIA:

Fever. If the patient's temperature is more than 100°F, the injection should be delayed until the fever has been down for at least 24 hours.

Asthma patients with chest congestion. If the patient is experiencing chest congestion/wheeze/chest tightness, then the injection should be delayed until those symptoms have cleared. If the asthmatic patient's peak flow reading is below 80% of expected, then the injection will not be given. The patient should wait at least 24 hours after an asthma attack to receive an injection.

BETA-BLOCKERS: If you are taking allergy injections and have been placed on beta-blocker medications, you should notify the shot nurse/doctor **IMMEDIATELY**.

PRESCRIPTION REFILLS: Please call ahead to request refills/samples of medications. This saves you and other patients valuable shot room time.

MISSED INJECTIONS: If you have missed your scheduled injection by several weeks (or months), please call ahead so a dosage adjustment may be made before you arrive.

ALLERGY INJECTION CHARGES: There are two charges for allergy injections. **The first charge** is for the allergy extract. The extract is priced by dosages per bottle. Bottles contain 6-8 doses, depending on whether you are building or at your maintenance dose. Most patients will use 5-6 bottles the first year, and 3-4 bottles each year afterwards for each extract. The shot room nurses will notify you when they will be ordering additional extract. **The second charge** is an injection administration fee. This will be billed after every injection.

Allergy immunotherapy may be covered by your insurance, but you will need to check your individual policy. It is your responsibility to keep your insurance referral current, if required; otherwise, you will be billed for the cost of your extract and injection.

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY: For after hours emergencies, please call the Medical Exchange (501) 663-8400 and ask for the doctor on call for Arkansas Allergy & Asthma Clinic, P.A.