



What is Immunotherapy?

Allergies are caused by your immune system overreacting towards harmless substances the same way it would react towards something harmful like bacteria or virus. Allergy immunotherapy slowly strengthens your immune system so you can develop tolerance or immunity to these substances upon exposure.

Allergy immunotherapy is a clinically documented treatment that may reduce or potentially remove your allergy symptoms and the need for traditional, symptom-relieving medication. This kind of treatment has been in use worldwide for over 100 years with many clinical studies showing it is both safe and effective.

How does Immunotherapy work?

Build-up Phase: The build-up process with injecting a weak concentration of an allergen extract. Injections of increasingly stronger are given until you reach the maximum dose. This process typically takes several months but can vary based on your sensitivity to the injections and your specific treatment plan.

Maintenance Phase: Once you have reached your maximum dose, you enter the “maintenance” phase of treatment. Immunotherapy is recommended for 3-5 years. However, the length of treatment is determined by your physician’s recommendation.

Why consider Immunotherapy?

Among the wide variety of treatment possibilities available today, allergy immunotherapy, according to the World Health Organization, is the only treatment that targets the cause of allergy and alters the natural course of the disease. Many patients experience:

- An improved quality of life.
- Less symptomatic drugs in the case of respiratory allergies.
- Ability to enjoy outdoor activities during allergy season
- Fewer problems having pets at home or visiting family or friends with pets.
- Immunotherapy has a long-standing effect after it is discontinued and can potentially “cure” your allergies. Research suggests that results are maintained for 5 to 10 years after the course of allergy shots has been completed.

What goes into my treatment?

Your treatment will review your skin or blood test results and determine which allergy triggers should be selected for immunotherapy. The most commonly treated allergens include house dust mites, pollens (from grasses, trees and weeds), dander from pets and other animals, and molds. The products mixed for your allergy shots are called allergenic extracts. These are natural, purified preparations made from the actual allergen source and are approved for clinical treatment.



Is immunotherapy right for me?

Immunotherapy is usually recommended for those patients who:

- Have moderate to severe symptoms that occur for more than 2-3 days months out of the year.
- Take symptomatic medications but have not noticed significant improvement in their symptoms.
- Cannot easily avoid the allergens triggering their symptoms.
- Prefer natural immunotherapy treatment over long-term drug treatment.

What are my next steps?

- Check with your insurance provider regarding coverage for allergy immunotherapy.
- Discuss your treatment options with you doctor.
- Consider the time commitment you will need to make to achieve the best possible results.
- Work with your doctor to build a treatment plan that best suits you, and stick to it.

Immunotherapy helps reduce symptoms in up to 85% of people being treated for hay fever.

When will I begin to feel better?

Many patients begin to see results as early as 3-6 months or shortly after reaching maintenance. Your need for antihistamine drugs may decrease, and your symptoms may become less severe. Research has suggested that immunotherapy may prevent the onset of the other allergies and the development of asthma. Also, the treatment has a long-standing effect after it is discontinued. The most recent findings show that the benefits of allergy shots are maintained years after completing treatment. For some people, symptom relief may persist indefinitely. The key to success is to be patient. Your chances of seeing improvements in your allergy symptoms drastically increase the closer you follow your physician's treatment.

Four Tips for Success with Treatment:

1. **Be Compliant**- Sticking to your treatment plan increases your chances of success.
2. **Be Committed**- The long nature of treatment can appear intimidating but the results can be life-changing.
3. **Be Patient**- Symptom relief can vary between patients.
4. **Be Involved**- Report any signs of a reaction to your physician so they can track your progress and make adjustments.