

CINCINNATI ALLERGY & ASTHMA CENTER, INC.

IMMUNOTHERAPY (ALLERGY SHOTS)

What Are Allergy Shots, and What Can They Do For Me? Allergy shots (otherwise known as immunotherapy, or desensitization) help make your immune system less sensitive to the things that cause your allergy symptoms.

Should I Have Allergy Shots?

MAYBE - If you are allergic to things that are unavoidable, such as trees, molds, or dust.

MAYBE - If you have to take medicine(s) more often than not to control your allergies, OR despite your medicines, you are still having allergy symptoms.

MAYBE - If your allergies are interfering with daily activities – EX: loss of school or workdays due to fatigue, and/or infection.

MAYBE - If you are willing to make a 3-5 year commitment of getting allergy shots.

What Can Allergy Shots Do For Me? Eventually, you may no longer need your allergy medicine. You should have fewer or milder allergy symptoms. You may no longer have allergy symptoms. You may not have to visit your health care provider as often.

Can Allergy Shots Really Help? The success rate for allergy shots is high – 75%-85%. Many people consider themselves “cured,” but some will suffer a recurrence. Some people will require shots for longer than five years but **most** people who complete the allergy shot program do not need to take shots again.

How Do Allergy Shots Work? Allergy shots result in your body making "blocking IGG" antibodies to your "allergy IGE" antibodies. This makes you react less to the things that cause your allergy symptoms. If your allergies are "blocked," you do not release histamines or other allergy mediators that cause your allergy symptoms.

How Long Before Allergy Shots Start To Work? Allergy shots may start to work in four to six months. For some people it may take a year. If there is no improvement after two years, discuss this with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Can You Still Take Your Other Medications? The goal of the allergy shots is to allow you to feel as good as possible, with as little medication as possible, and with as few shots as possible. You may still need to take your medications until the allergy shots begin to work.

How Much Do Allergy Shots Cost? Allergy shots maybe somewhat costly the first year, when more frequent allergy injections are needed. The vial of allergy extract is a separate cost from the actual injection. Your insurance is billed when the allergy vial of extract is made and the injection cost is billed when the shot is administered. Coverage of the cost by insurance plans and HMO varies (ask staff for present billing cost). In succeeding years, when the injections are spread out to 2-8 weeks, the cost dramatically decreases. Allergy shots may save you money, as you will not require as much medicine, and as you will decrease the number of visits to your health care provider.

Are Allergy Shots Painful? The needle used to give shots is very small and thin. The shot is given in the fatty part of the arm, not into the muscle. Most people say that when the allergy shot is given correctly that it does not hurt.

Are Allergy Shots Risky? Allergic reactions are rare. Reactions can occur because you are receiving small amounts of what you are allergic to. The most serious reactions occur 0 seconds to 30 minutes.

LOCAL REACTIONS: If the shot is given correctly, consist of a mosquito-bite like reaction that may itch. Some swelling and/or redness may occur in the first twenty minutes. If there is no discomfort, this may be ignored. If there is a local reaction (1/2 inch), please notify us before receiving the next injection. Occasionally, you may develop a delayed local reaction between 4 and 48 hours. These reactions require no treatment, but may be counteracted by using a cool compress and by taking a dose of an antihistamine, plus Tylenol for pain. If the shot is given incorrectly (into the muscle) may get red, hot, tender, painful, and may even bruise! This also may be counteracted by using a cool compress plus Tylenol for pain.

SYSTEMIC REACTIONS: This type of reaction is more serious. If you have a local reaction larger than a fifty-cent piece, the dosage of your next injection may be changed. Please tell the person giving you your next injection about your reaction before another shot is given. A large local reaction can lead to a systemic reaction. This reaction can cause an immediate onset of allergy symptoms, such as sneezing, wheezing, or hives. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will give you prompt medical attention.

EVERYONE MUST WAIT 20-MINUTES AFTER EACH ALLERGY SHOT IN CASE OF A REACTION!

Cincinnati Allergy Center

Immunotherapy

(Allergy Shots)

The doctors have determined that allergy shots (immunotherapy or desensitization) are necessary for treatment of your allergic symptoms. Allergy shots are injections of gradually increasing doses of allergens, aiming to reduce your sensitivity to your allergies. Multiple controlled clinical studies of the response to allergy shots have shown that patients with nasal allergies, allergic asthma and other allergic problems can respond well to allergy immunotherapy. Additionally, patients with life-threatening bee sting allergies respond well to venom allergy shots.

Maximum benefits from allergy shots usually occur within the first one to two years after reaching an adequate maintenance dose. The length of treatment depends on the individual patient's response to their immunotherapy. In some instances, patients are able to discontinue immunotherapy after three to five years with continued control of their allergy symptoms.

Although allergy shots are generally safe when administered as per our instructions, a patient must be aware that both local and systemic (generalized) reactions can occur. Significant local reactions consist of immediate redness and swelling (a hive) larger than a 25 cent piece or a hive which lasts longer than 24 hours. Occasionally, reactions begin hours after the allergy immunotherapy shot. These reactions are called delayed reactions. All large reactions should be noted and reported before the next allergy injection. While systemic reactions are unusual, it is important that the patient understands the possibilities of these reactions and follows safety guidelines. Systemic reactions include total body redness, hives, itching, swelling, breathing problems and/or wheezing. Systemic reactions require immediate treatment and notification of our office. Treatment of systemic reactions requires the administration of adrenaline (epinephrine) and evaluation by a physician.

FOR OPTIMAL SAFETY OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PRECAUTIONS:

1. Acutely ill patients should not receive allergy injections (i.e., fever greater than 100.6°F, significant upper respiratory tract infections or obvious wheezing within the past 24 hours).
2. Avoid strenuous exercise for several hours after the injection.
3. Report any new drugs which have been added, especially beta blockers (i.e., Inderal/ propranolol). Certain drugs may make reactions to allergy shots difficult to treat.
4. After receiving your allergy shot, stay at the doctor's office for at least 20 minutes and before leaving the doctor's office, have the site of the allergy injection checked. If there are any systemic reactions after leaving the doctor's office, report them immediately and seek appropriate medical attention.
5. Always check with the nurse prior to getting your allergy shot, that you are receiving your allergy shot that was drawn from your allergy immunotherapy vial.
6. If any questions arise regarding your allergen immunotherapy, please notify our office so that these questions can be answered.