

Allergen Immunotherapy Frequently Asked Questions

What is Allergen Immunotherapy (AIT)?

Immunotherapy is a preventive treatment for allergic reactions to substances such as pollens (grasses, trees and weeds), house dust mites, molds, animal dander and stinging insects (like bees and fire ants). Immunotherapy involves giving gradually increasing doses of the natural substance, or allergen, to which the person is allergic. The incremental increases of the allergen cause the immune system to become less sensitive to the substance, which reduces the symptoms of allergy when the substance is encountered in the future. Immunotherapy also reduces the inflammation that characterizes rhinitis and asthma.

Who Can Benefit From Immunotherapy?

- People that desire a better long-term solution to their allergy problem.
- Patients that have allergy triggers they cannot avoid (pollen, dust, pets, etc.).
- Patients experiencing side effects or reduced effectiveness from allergy medication.
- Patients that desire to decrease their medication use.
- Patients with allergic asthma that want to decrease their use of asthma medications.
- Patients with eczema or atopic dermatitis, when associated with other allergens.
- Patients that have severe reactions to stinging insects, such as bees, fire ants, wasps.

How do allergy injections work and are they successful?

The body develops stronger immunity and decreased symptoms as the allergy injection dose is increased and repeated over time. The body's reaction to allergens is switched from allergy to "tolerance." Allergy injections are over 90% effective when given properly and proven in clinical studies to decrease allergy symptoms and medication use, prevent new allergies and asthma in children and promote lasting relief of allergy symptoms. Research shows allergy injections are cost-effective and reduce overall health care expenses, including costs from prescription medicine use, office visits, hospitalizations, missed work/school and decreased productivity (presentism).

What are Allergy Drops?

Specific amounts of natural allergen extracts are placed under the tongue causing the body to develop tolerance to the allergens.

Is AIT effective for children?

AIT is especially effective in children because treatment has been proven to help prevent the development of new allergies and asthma. As many as 25% of allergic children may develop asthma as they get older if untreated. Allergy injections are normally given to children five years or older, but may occasionally be given earlier.

How long will it take to feel better on AIT?

Some patients notice an improvement of symptoms within several weeks during the build up phase, but it usually takes six to 12 months on the maintenance dose to see a significant improvement.

What is the AIT process?

There are two major phases:

- **AIT-Build Up:** the strength of the allergy vaccines is gradually increased to reach AIM.
 - **Traditional:** *Injections given one to two times per week over three to six months*
 - **Cluster:** *Accelerated Build taking approximately four to six weeks to reach maintenance.*
 - **RUSH:** *Rapid Build in one day, taking approximately six to eight weeks to reach maintenance.*
- **Allergy Immunotherapy Maintenance (AIM):** Started after the target dose is achieved.

Are allergy injections safe?

Yes. The most common type of reaction is a local reaction. These vary from a dime-sized itchy spot to a large lemon-sized area of swelling. These often do not require specific treatment and typically improve as allergy injections are continued. The risk of a serious allergic reaction is rare.

Can allergies go away on their own?

Not usually. Although it is possible that allergies will improve, most people will continue to have symptoms that remain the same or worsen over time.

How are specific allergens selected for you?

Our injections are completely individualized based on your clinical history, allergen exposure and allergy test results. Allergy vaccines should be prescribed by a board-certified allergist/immunologist.

Can allergy injections treat food allergies?

Recently, AENT Associates started offering Oral Immunotherapy (OIT) for Peanut Allergies. Allergy injections may help some individuals with pollen-food syndrome, a condition where raw fruits, vegetables and some nuts cause itching of the mouth and tongue. These individuals often have severe pollen sensitivity and food-related symptoms may improve with treatment of underlying pollen allergy. However, AIT is not generally indicated specifically for food allergies. The best option for people with food allergies is to strictly avoid foods that cause symptoms.

If you have any further questions, please visit our website at www.aentassociates.com.