

- **Allergies to Pollens (Hay Fever)**

For Subcutaneous Immunotherapy

This involves weekly injections for a number of weeks beginning 3 to 4 months before the pollen season starts (i.e. Feb) and maintained until the end of the pollen season (i.e. Aug).

For Sublingual Immunotherapy

Treatment should begin 2 to 3 months before the pollen season (i.e. March) and maintained until the end of the pollen season (i.e. Aug).

For maximum effect, treatment must be given each year for 3-5 consecutive pollen seasons. You should notice a reduction in your symptoms after the first year but the greatest effect is after 3 years.

What Are the Risks?

For sublingual immunotherapy, no serious reactions have so far been discovered in large studies on hundreds of children. The most common side effects were itchiness and swelling in the mouth after taking the medicine. This can be preempted by taking antihistamines beforehand, or if the symptoms are recurrent, reducing the dose. Studies from Europe report that side effects are very rarely serious enough to deter patients from further treatment.

For subcutaneous immunotherapy, if side effects occur, they will almost always appear within an hour of your treatment and usually within minutes. For this reason, you must stay in the clinic for an hour's observation.

You are advised not to engage in any vigorous exercise for twelve hours after your treatment, as this can sometimes release allergens from the injection site and contribute to side effects.

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Service Hours

Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri: 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Wed: Closed all day

Sat: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

(except in the second and fourth week of each month, the Centre will open all day Saturdays)

Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

Consultation by Appointment



Immunotherapy



For enquiries and appointments,
please contact us

What Is Immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is the practice of administering gradually increasing doses of an allergen extract in order to reduce the allergic symptoms that it causes. The cause of your allergy, such as pollen, house dust mites, cats or dogs, is known as an allergen. It was first carried out almost 100 years ago and is now in widespread use around the world. It is sometimes referred to as 'allergy vaccination' or 'desensitisation'. The amount of allergen injected subcutaneously is gradually increased over a period of three to five years, which reduces your sensitivity to it. Injections need to be given in hospital and close observation is required for an hour after each 'shot', because of a small risk of a severe allergic reaction. Immunotherapy can also now be given without injections. Instead, the allergen extract is squirted under the tongue, and this is called 'sublingual immunotherapy'.



What Are the Benefits of Immunotherapy?

Most patients receiving treatment report an improvement in symptoms and less medication use. Sublingual or subcutaneous immunotherapy against year round allergens such as house dust mites can also help in reducing the symptoms of allergic asthma. There is a suggestion that using immunotherapy from an early age may actually prevent new allergies developing and reduce the likelihood of getting asthma at all. But more research is required before it can be adopted for prevention. For maximum effect the treatment must be given each year for three consecutive years. You should notice a reduction in your symptoms after the first year but the greatest effect is after 3 years. The effects of the treatment can last seven years or more.

Before Your Treatment

We will ask you to sign a consent form, which confirms that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You may have to stop taking certain medications temporarily while having immunotherapy, such as beta blockers or certain antidepressants. Your doctor will discuss this with you before you start your treatment. You will not have to stop taking any existing allergy or asthma treatment.

What Happens during Treatment?

Your treatment will depend on the type of allergy you have:

- **Allergies to Perennial (Year-Long) Allergens or Insect Stings (Bee or Wasp Stings, Cats, Dogs, or House Dust Mites)**

For Subcutaneous Immunotherapy

Treatment is given in two phases: initial (up-dosing) treatment and then maintenance. Initial treatment involves weekly injection for 6 to 12 weeks depending on the vaccine required. Maintenance treatment involves returning for injections every 4 weeks for three years.

For Sublingual Immunotherapy

The immunotherapy comes in a simple spray device. The first dose will be given in hospital under close supervision and you will be shown exactly how to use the spray pump. The immunotherapy is then taken every day in increasing doses until the maintenance dose. Your treatment needs to be taken on a daily basis for at least 3 years.

Your symptoms should improve from the end of the first year, but maintenance treatment is needed to reduce your symptoms in the long term. Your doctor will explain further about maintenance treatments. If you decide to have immunotherapy, you must commit yourself to the full course of treatment. If you miss more than 2 weeks of weekly injections the dose must be reduced, increasing the length of your treatment. You may even have to start your treatment again from the beginning.

