



Frequently Asked Questions – Allergy Injections

What are allergy injections?

Commonly known as “allergy shots,” they are a series of injections designed to control your allergies. Allergy shots are not a medication; medicines treat the symptoms of allergies, while allergy shots treat the cause. Over time, you can expect a long term improvement of your symptoms.

Who should consider receiving allergy injections?

Individuals who should consider allergy injections include:

- people with moderate to severe allergies
- people with sinus problems or asthma due to allergies
- people with severe cat or dog allergies that can't always avoid them
- people don't respond to allergy medications or would like to avoid long term use of those medicines
- people with allergies to stinging insects (bees, wasp, etc.)
- people who are able to commit to a regularly scheduled treatment plan

What are the benefits?

Patients treated with allergy shots are expected to have a marked decrease in allergy symptoms as well as a marked decrease in the use of allergy medications. Additional symptoms like fatigue, poor concentration, ear and sinus infections, and headaches can also be improved. Additionally, asthma and sinusitis episodes will usually be decreased.

Children treated with allergy shots are less likely to develop new allergies and are less likely to develop asthma.

When will I see the benefit?

You may begin to see the benefits of allergy shots during the build-up phase, but it may take a few months on the maintenance dose to start seeing significant results. On average, maintenance treatment is continued for three to five years. After you stop the shots, sustained benefit for several years is expected.

How do allergy injections work?

Allergy shots work like a vaccine. We are gradually “immunizing” you to the specific allergens (pollens, animal dander, molds, and/or stinging insects) to which you are allergic. In this way, your immune system develops a stronger tolerance to those allergens.

Allergy shots occur in two phases:

- Build-up phase – The frequency of injections generally ranges from 1-2 times per week for about 3-6 months. If you elect to receive “cluster” allergy shots, you can reach a maintenance dose in seven weeks.

- Maintenance phase – This begins when the highest dose that can be tolerated is achieved. Once this happens, a regular schedule of weekly to every 2 weeks the first 1-2 years is continued. Thereafter, shots are given every 3-4 weeks for 3-5 years.

What is my commitment?

- Attend – to a regular shot schedule of weekly to every 2 weeks the first 1-2 years; thereafter every 3-4 weeks for 3-5 years.
- Remain – in the office 20 -30 minutes after receiving the injection to monitor for any adverse reactions, or 30 minutes after Venom Therapy for stinging insects.
- Meet – with your CAAC physician at least once a year so that your progress can be monitored.

Will I experience any negative reactions?

Allergy shots are, in general, extremely safe. However, we are immunizing you to allergens you are allergic to, so reactions to the shots can occur. Two types of reactions can occur:

- Local reactions: Redness or swelling can appear at the injection sight and are common. Sometimes, local swelling can occur several hours after your injection.
- Generalized (“systemic”) reactions: These reactions may involve itching, hives, or worsening of your nose and eye symptoms. Rarely, a more serious systemic reaction called “anaphylaxis” can develop. Symptoms can include swelling in the throat, wheezing and shortness of breath, stomach cramping, or dizziness. They require immediate treatment and respond quickly to medications. Most of these reactions develop within 20-30 minutes after the injection, which is why we require for you to remain in the office for that period of time.

What is my financial responsibility?

A majority of health insurance companies consider Immunotherapy to be a covered benefit and will cover a majority of the costs. There are two fees associated with allergy shots: the cost of the extract and the injections. Please note that copays, co-insurance and/or deductibles may apply.

CAAC will assist you with insurance verification by giving you an estimate of your benefits and “out of pocket” costs.

How do I get started?

Talk with your CAAC physician to see if allergy shots are right for you.

Contact your insurance company so you understand your financial responsibility, and then call us to prepare your allergy vaccine (extract). Once we have confirmation that you would like to start shots, our Antigen Lab will prepare your extract. This will take 1 to 2 weeks. Once your extract is ready, we’ll contact you and you can start right away.

Injection hours are specific to each office. No appointment is necessary.