

Sublingual (Under the Tongue) Immunotherapy What You Need To Know

What is it?

Sublingual immunotherapy, or SLIT, is a form of immunotherapy that involves putting drops of allergen extracts under the tongue. Many people refer to this process as “allergy drops,” and it is an alternative treatment for allergy injections. This form of immunotherapy has been used for years in Europe, and recently has had increased interest in the United States. However, at this time, it is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States, nor a covered benefit by health insurance at this time. Nevertheless, the materials used for SLIT are the same that have been used for traditional allergy injections.

What are the benefits?

- SLIT can be effective in children to reduce symptoms of allergic rhinitis and asthma, prevent development of new allergies, and reduce the likelihood of developing future asthma.
- SLIT can be safely administered at home
- Needle injections are avoided

How do I get started?

- Commitment of adherence to daily at home therapy is established with patient or parent.
- Payment for allergen extract is “out of pocket” \$80 /month and is prepaid for the mix.
- Copays, deductibles, co-insurance, are patient’s responsibility for the Physician or Physician Assistant visits or other charges.
- An appointment will be scheduled with the Physicians Assistant to receive your first dose. There will be additional visits at weeks 4 and 12 while “building” to your maintenance dose.
- After receiving a dose in the office, there is a 30 minute wait to monitor for any reactions.

What else do I need to know?

- Allergen extract comes in a dropper bottle
- Allergen extract taken daily
- Allergen extract must be taken on an empty stomach (no food for 8 hours) in the morning before breakfast
- No food or drink for 15 minutes after ingesting antigen
- Allergen extract is placed under the tongue and held for 2 minutes
- Allergen extract is stored in refrigerator or in a location with normal room temperature. Bottle can be stored at room temperature for 30 days
- Call office if any open sores in mouth, oral surgery, or lost tooth have occurred. Vaccine dosing is postponed until open areas are healed.
- Office visits are scheduled prior to receiving refills; typically every 3 months

What are common side effects/adverse reactions?

- Itching in the mouth, primarily under the tongue is most common. This effect appears to decrease over the first 2-4 weeks of treatment. Occasionally, patients report swelling of the tongue or lips. These effects are transient, but patients may benefit from taking an antihistamine if needed.
 - a. itching, burning, irritation, numbness, and tingling under the tongue or in the mouth
 - b. sore throat
 - c. cold sores
 - d. hay fever symptoms
 - e. GI: nausea/heartburn, usually mild and transient