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IMMUNOTHERAPY

COMMITMENT & CONSENT FORM

Immunotherapy (allergy shots) is a form of therapy for allergic rhinitis (hayfever), for stinging insect allergy, and in some instances, for allergic asthma. When these injections are repeated, the body builds resistance (or immunity) to the allergen. Many carefully performed studies have shown that immunotherapy decreases allergic symptoms. Remember, avoidance of allergens when possible is the first and most important form of therapy.

Please report to your physician’s office for each injection. Report any prior reactions or any illnesses or any new medications. You will receive your shot if appropriate. **YOU MUST WAIT IN THE WAITING ROOM FOR 30 MINUTES .**

There are many reasons why you may NOT receive a shot. They include: increased temperature; significant decrease in peak flow reading; exacerbation of asthma; possible strep throat; severe sunburn; or any illness requiring patient to stay home from school/work.

In the course of immunotherapy, very small doses of allergen are given to the patient, and are gradually increased each week. This gradual build-up of the allergen decreases the possibility of the injection itself causing an allergic reaction. Considerable dedication is required of the patient/family who must continue the weekly or bi-weekly injections until a high dose of allergen is reached. Only after a high or “maintenance dose” is reached will the full benefit of the injections be appreciated. It may take up to a year for symptom relief to occur. Following the weekly build-up dose, which generally occurs over 4 to 5 months, maintenance injections are slowly built up to monthly. Missed shots or reactions to shots can delay reaching maintenance dosage. The mixture of allergens given consists of those allergens to which the patient has positive skin tests and an appropriate history. Mixtures are tailor-made for each patient. Extract is remixed every 6 months because it loses its potency. **Allergy injections are a total commitment of 3 to 5 years.**

There are two types of reactions that can occur after an allergy shot. The first, called a local reaction, includes swelling, redness, and itching at the site. You may use an ice pack on the shot area, take over-the-counter antihistamines (such as Benadryl, which may cause drowsiness), or prescription antihistamines. Report any reaction at next shot visit **PRIOR to receiving your injection !!** The second type of reaction is the generalized, systemic, or “anaphylactic reaction.” *This reaction is potentially life-threatening!* It may include one or all of the following symptoms: hives; generalized itching; coughing; tightness of throat or chest; wheezing; increased allergic symptoms, such as runny nose & watery eyes. A shot of epinephrine (Adrenaline) usually, promptly, relieves the symptoms. This severe reaction requires **IMMEDIATE** attention! **Promptly notify the physician if any systemic reaction has occurred!**

Medications called beta-blockers (used to treat high blood pressure, glaucoma, and occasionally migraine headaches) may increase side effects of allergy shots, and **MUST BE REPORTED.**

A six month follow-up visit with the physician is required in order to assess progress; yearly visits are then required. Please inform our office if you feel that the injections are not working.

Let us know as soon as possible if you become pregnant. We will not build up your doses until after your baby is born.

I have read the explanation of allergy shots and agree to me/my child receiving allergy shots. I also agree to any additional therapy for reactions that is required.

Patient/Parent Signature: _____

Date of Signature: _____

Office you will be receiving injections: _____

Immunotherapy

If you have allergies, out of the ordinary sensitivity to substances that don't bother most people, or asthma that gets worse from allergic "triggers", you may wonder whether allergy shots (also called immunotherapy) might help you. The following guide will introduce you to some of the basics involved in this kind of treatment.

What is Immunotherapy?

Think of immunotherapy as a "vaccination" against allergies. However, unlike a single shot you might get for tetanus or the flu, immunotherapy involves giving you steady, increasing amounts of the substances that cause your allergies. The whole idea of treating you with the very things that make you miserable may seem a bit odd but, in many cases, it works.

How does it work?

Doctors think that receiving regular amounts of the substances that cause your allergies actually make you less sensitive to them. In other words, allergy shots seem to build up your resistance to the things that cause your symptoms, so the next time you run into them, they give you less trouble.

What's involved in immunotherapy?

First, based on your history and skin test results, the substances that cause your allergies will be determined. The results of these tests will help your doctor decide whether immunotherapy might help you.

Immunotherapy has been used for over 70 years, and doctors have learned that it works better against some substances than others. As a general rule, immunotherapy tends to be most effective against triggers that you breathe, such as pollens, house dust, molds and animal dander. Immunotherapy against food allergies is still in the experimental stage.

Generally, allergy shots are given year round. Occasionally, however, shots are given just for the six months before an allergy season.

At first, you will receive allergy shots once or twice a week. Treatment starts with a tiny amount of the substance that bothers you. Over four to six months, your doctor will gradually increase the amount in each shot until it reaches a level that can really help you.

The reason your doctor starts with a small amount is because you may develop a severe reaction to an allergy shot before your resistance builds up. That's why immunotherapy is always given in a place equipped to handle a severe reaction quickly. That's also why you must stay there for a minimum of 20 minutes after each shot.

If immunotherapy helps you, your doctor will usually continue it for several years. After the first six months, you may need a shot only once every two weeks. In some cases, if your symptoms return after allergy shots are stopped, it may make sense for you to start getting them again. Fortunately, most people don't need to continue getting their shots indefinitely.

When will my symptoms get better?

Most people begin to notice improvement after they have had allergy shots for six months or longer. Be patient, it takes time to get results.

Be sure never to miss an appointment for your shots. In addition, tell your doctor whether you think the shots are helping you and about any bad reactions you get from them. For example, some people develop a sore, swollen arm; wheezing; or an outbreak of hives after they return home from receiving an allergy shot. Reactions like these don't necessarily mean allergy shots should be stopped, but your doctor may need to make an adjustment in the amount of each shot. If you have asthma, you should NEVER receive your allergy shot when your peak flows are significantly decreased and/or you are having an exacerbation of your asthma.

Also, keep in mind that some people do not benefit from immunotherapy. The only way to tell is to try it.

What can I expect from immunotherapy?

If immunotherapy is successful, you will probably have fewer reactions and less severe reactions to the substances that cause your allergies or asthma to flare up. Allergy shots are not a cure, but they can improve your quality of life (see "Points to Remember about Immunotherapy"). You may find that you need less medicine than before to control your allergies or asthma.

Side effects of allergy shots are rare but have included hives, wheezing, throat tightness and shock.

Points to Remember about Immunotherapy

- You need to get your shots regularly for immunotherapy to work. Be sure not to miss an appointment (unless you are experiencing an exacerbation of your asthma)
- You may develop a severe reaction to an allergy shot. If this takes place outside your doctor's office, let him or her know immediately.
- Immunotherapy is not a quick fix. You may need to receive it for several years.
- There are no guarantees. While immunotherapy works very well for some people, it may not help others at all.