

Why it's done: Allergy shots may be a good treatment choice for you if: Medications don't control your symptoms well, and you can't avoid the things that cause your allergic reactions. Allergy medications interact with other medications you need to take or cause bothersome side effects. You want to reduce your long-term use of allergy medication.

Allergy shots can be used to control symptoms triggered by:

- **Seasonal allergies:** If you have seasonal allergic asthma or hay fever symptoms, you may be allergic to pollens released by trees, grasses, or weeds.

- **Indoor allergens:** If you have year-round symptoms, you may be sensitive to indoor allergens, such as dust mites, cockroaches, mold, or dander from pets such as cats or dogs.

Risk: Most people don't have any trouble with allergy shots. But they contain the substances that cause your allergies – so reactions are possible, and can include:

- **Local reactions**, which can involve redness, swelling, or irritation at the injection site. These common reactions typically begin within a few hours of the injection and clear up soon after.

- **Systemic reactions**, which are less common – but potentially more serious. You may develop sneezing, nasal congestion or hives. More severe reactions may include throat swelling, wheezing or chest tightness.

- **Anaphylaxis** is a rare life-threatening reaction to allergy shots. It can cause low blood pressure and trouble breathing. Anaphylaxis often begins within 30 minutes of an injection, but sometimes starts later than that. If you get weekly or monthly shots on a regular schedule without missing doses, you're less likely to have a serious reaction.

Taking an antihistamine medication 1 hour before getting your allergy shot can reduce the risk of a reaction. Check with your doctor to see if this is recommended for you. The possibility of a severe reaction is scary – but you won't be on your own. You'll be observed in the doctor's office for 30 minutes after each shot, when the most serious reactions usually occur. If you have a severe reaction after you leave, return to your doctor's office or the

nearest emergency room, whichever is closest to your location.

How to prepare: Before starting a course of allergy shots, your doctor may use a skin test to determine that your reactions are caused by an allergy – and which specific allergens cause your signs and symptoms. During a skin test, a small amount of the suspected allergen is scratched into your skin and the area is then observed for about 25 minutes. Swelling and redness indicate an allergy to the substance. Your doctor may also use an allergy blood test. When you go in for allergy shots, let the nurses or doctors know if you are feeling unwell in any way. This is especially important if you have asthma. Also let them know if you had any symptoms after a previous allergy shots.

What you can expect: Allergy shots are usually injected in the upper arm. To be effective, allergy shots are given on a schedule that involves two phases:

- **The build-up phase** generally takes 3-6 months. Typically, shots are given 1-2 times a week. During the buildup phase, the allergen dose is gradually increased with each shot.

- **The maintenance phase** generally continues for 3-5 years or longer. You'll need maintenance shots about once a month.

Results: Allergy symptoms won't stop overnight. They usually improve during the first year of treatment, but the most noticeable improvement often happens during the second year. By the third year, most people are desensitized to the allergens contained in the shots – and no longer have significant allergic reactions to those substances. After a few years of successful treatments, some people don't have significant allergy problems even after allergy shots are stopped. Other people need ongoing shots to keep symptoms under control.

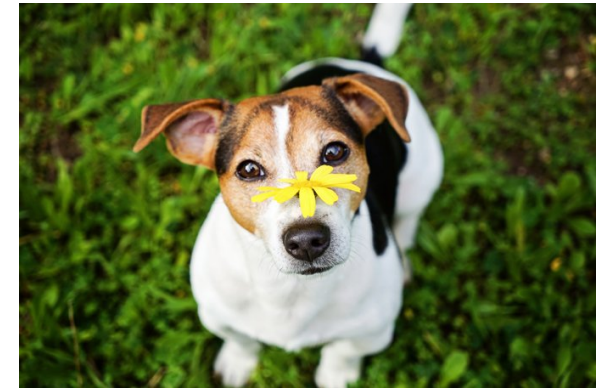
What Should I Expect Afterward:

Usually, you'll stay at the doctor's office for about 30 minutes after you get an allergy shot. That's to make sure you don't get side effects like itchy eyes, shortness of breath, a runny nose, or a tight throat. If you get these symptoms after you

leave, go back to your doctor's office or to the nearest emergency room.

Redness, swelling, or irritation right around the site of the injection is normal. You may apply an anti-itch cream (ex. Hydrocortisone cream, itch-x, Benadryl, etc.) along with a covered ice pack for 15 minutes to the area that is red.

Do Allergy Shots Work for Everyone? A lot depends on how many things you're allergic to and how severe your symptoms are. Generally, allergy shots work for allergies to bee stings, pollen, dust mites, mold, and pet dander. Immunotherapy can help reduce your allergies significantly or completely.



**GOODBYE
ALLERGIES**

IMMUNOTHERAPY INFORMATION SHEET



Definition:

Allergy shots are injections you receive at regular intervals over a period of approximately 3-5 years to stop or reduce allergy attacks. Allergy shots are a form of treatment called immunotherapy. Each allergy shot contains a tiny amount of the specific substance or substances that trigger your allergic reactions. These are called allergens. Allergy shots contain just enough allergens to stimulate your immune system, but not enough to cause a full-blown allergic reaction. Over time, your doctor will increase the dose of allergens in each of your allergy shots. Your immune system builds up a tolerance to the

allergens, causing your allergy symptoms to diminish over time.

CONTACT US:

Phone: (843) 863-1188

Fax: (843) 863-8286

Website: www.lowcountryent.com



Low Country ENT

EAR, NOSE & THROAT · HEAD & NECK SURGERY ·
HEARING AIDS · BALANCE TESTING · ALLERGY
TESTING & IMMUNOTHERAPY



LOW COUNTRY ENT
2580 Tricom St.
N. Charleston, SC 29406

**Immunothera
py
Information**