

Allergy and Immunology Health Services
John A. Panuto, M.D.

PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS AND **AGREEMENT TO BEGIN IMMUNOTHERAPY**

Immunotherapy (Allergy shots) is a specific medical treatment in which a patient receives injections of an extract that contains the patient's specific allergens such as dust mites, mold, and pollens from trees, grasses, or weeds.

The allergy injection is given under the skin of the upper outer arm, using a small needle that should cause only slight discomfort. The extract contains a mixture of allergens formulated specifically for each patient. If the patient has multiple allergies, the allergens may be divided into two or three different extract mixtures. These patients may receive two or three injections at each visit.

The patient may choose to receive injections in our office or from their primary care physician, who will receive written instructions from our office. Because of the potential reactions from the injections, they may not be administered at home or in a setting without appropriate measures to treat anaphylaxis. The allergy injections must be given under the supervision of a physician, and at a facility where measures for treatment of a severe life threatening allergic reaction are readily available. Allergy & Immunology Health Services will not be responsible for those patients administering injections at home against medical advice or receiving them in facilities that fail to comply with our recommendations.

In most cases, there are no side effects from the allergy injections, except for slight discomfort at the site of the injection. Sometimes a local reaction occurs in the form of redness, itching, and /or swelling at the site of the injection. The size of the raised area is important to note, since subsequent doses will be adjusted according to the size of the reaction. The medical staff will note the size of the raised area on the patient's arm after 20-30 minutes in the office and record it on the patient's record. Patients may sometimes have late local reactions to allergy injections. The patient should note the size of these reactions and inform the medical staff at the next visit. The size of the raised area can be described by comparing it in the size of a pea, dime, nickel, quarter, etc.

A severe systemic reaction to immunotherapy is rare, but always possible. Because of this, the patient is required to wait at least 20 minutes after the injection (each time) in a designated area where a physician and emergency equipment are immediately available.

If a patient has had a previous systemic reaction, he/she is required to wait at least 30 minutes. A systemic reaction can consist of any of the following symptoms: multiple hives, flushing, anxiety, shortness of breath, wheezing and/or light headedness. These symptoms are usually treated with an injection of adrenaline and an antihistamine, which usually reverses the symptoms readily. In extreme cases, more aggressive medical treatment may be necessary. Since these symptoms can occur up to one hour after the injection, patients must be aware of these possible symptoms and seek medical attention promptly if they occur. Patients should return to the place where the injection was given, or go to the nearest emergency room. It is important to note that symptoms can worsen if untreated, and may become life threatening.

Initially, the injections are given once per week until the maintenance dose is reached. It usually takes 4-6 months to reach the maintenance dose. As symptoms improve, the interval between injections can be gradually increased. The majority of patients can be maintained on injections every two weeks. The interval between injections will be adjusted during periodic follow-up visits in our office and is based on the response of each individual patient. Periodic follow-up is necessary, particularly when symptoms are worsening. Changing the allergic immune response is a gradual process, so the benefit from allergy injections may not be evident for 6-12 months. Most patients need to receive the injections for approximately 5 years, but this will be evaluated on an individual basis.

It should be emphasized that the allergy injection therapy is just one part of a comprehensive allergy management plan. All other treatment should be maintained as recommended, including medication, environmental control and strict avoidance of offending allergens if possible. The protective effect of allergy injections increases, the need for medications will likely decrease.

You will need to make appointments for routine follow up with Dr. Panuto after the first 6 months of treatment, then at least every 12 months thereafter. Requests for medication refills can be made by calling the office in which you see Dr. Panuto.

We have an allergy shot line for the convenience of the shot patients. Each evening the recording is updated with information regarding the following day. You should always call the line prior to coming in to ensure that the hours have not been changed. In the event of an emergency we may need to cancel hours without much notice. We update the shot line when there is a change in the availability of shot hours.

Please notify us at any point during the shot program, if any of the following have changed in your health status:

*If you are taking any high blood pressure or antidepressant medications

*If you are acutely ill or running a fever, please wait until you have recovered before coming in for an injection.

*Please inform us immediately if you become pregnant while on immunotherapy so that your dose can be adjusted accordingly.

I have read, understand, and accept the information given to me above regarding starting the immunotherapy program.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____

WITNESSED: _____

In case of Emergency, contact: _____ PH _____