



PATIENT INFORMATION BROCHURE

IMMUNOTHERAPY

- Immunotherapy is the only form of medical treatment which may be able to cure allergies.
- An allergen is the substance to which a patient is allergic.
- Once a patient has undergone a full course of immunotherapy, exposure to that allergen should no longer result in clinical reactions.
- Allergen immunotherapy is a highly effective treatment in carefully selected patients.
- It is available for bee or wasp venom hypersensitivity in the form of injections. This is offered to carefully selected subjects with severe reactions to bee or wasp sting.
- Immunotherapy for cat, dog, horse, grass pollens, tree pollens, weed pollens, some moulds and house dust mite (air-borne allergens) allergy is also available. This may be given as drops administered at home, or as injections by a doctor.

HOW IS IMMUNOTHERAPY GIVEN?

Immunotherapy is available in 2 forms:

- Subcutaneous (Injection) Immunotherapy
- Sublingual (Oral) Immunotherapy

Injection Immunotherapy is used mostly for venom allergy.

Oral immunotherapy is preferred for desensitization to airborne allergens.

Injection Immunotherapy:

A small dose is given, with the concentration increasing weekly, until the maintenance dose is achieved. This usually takes 16-18 weeks. Maintenance is continued 6-8 weekly for at least 3 years.

Oral Immunotherapy:

The vaccine is given daily, as drops which are placed under the tongue. This should be continued for 3 years.

WHICH PATIENTS BENEFIT?

- Immunotherapy is not effective for all patients with allergies.
- It is the only curative therapy for patients with bee or wasp venom sensitivity.
- It works best when the patients are monosensitive i.e. their allergic symptoms occur when exposed to a single allergen.
- It is particularly effective for patients who have severe symptoms due to house dust mites.
- It may also be given to selected patients with severe allergic sensitivity to cats, dogs and horses.
- Patients with multiple allergies do not usually respond well to immunotherapy.
- It is important before immunotherapy is initiated that the patient be carefully evaluated by a doctor experienced in treating allergies, and in the use of immunotherapy.
- Allergy tests need to be performed, and allergen avoidance measures should be implemented.

For additional reading, visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allergen_immunotherapy