

Comparing Allergen Immunotherapy Options



What Is Allergen Immunotherapy?

Allergen immunotherapy changes the way your immune system responds to allergens.

It involves the regular and gradual administration of your trigger allergen to build up tolerance over time. Allergen Immunotherapy is delivered via injection (allergy shots) or tablets. This treatment decreases some cells, chemicals and antibodies in your system that cause your allergy symptoms and increases others that improve health, which ultimately means you will no longer react to your trigger allergen.

The short-term goal of allergen immunotherapy is to control symptoms. The long-term goals of allergen immunotherapy are to:

- Lower the risk of complications in the nose, eyes, sinuses and lungs.
- May lessen the risk of sinus, eye and ear infections that keep coming back.
- Reduce the chance of developing asthma, or, if you already have asthma, reduce the chance that it will get worse over time.

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What's Involved?

Allergy Shots

Allergy Tablets

How is it administered?

Injected in the arm. Afterwards, you'll wait 30 minutes in your doctor's office.

Tablet is placed under the tongue. The first dose is given in your doctor's office.

When and how long do I take it?

Typically weekly for the first 3 to 12 months, then monthly. Most patients see significant benefit within 1 to 3 years. A full course of treatment is considered to be 3 to 5 years.

After the first dose in the doctor's office, the tablet is given at home daily.

Which allergens are covered?

All grass pollens, tree pollens, weed pollens, mold spores, animal dander (cat, dog, etc.), and house dust mites are available for treatment.

GRASTEK[®] and ORALAIR[®] for pasture grasses, such as Timothy; taken before and during plant-growing season. GRASTEK[®] can also be taken year-round for 3 years.

RAGWITEK[®] for ragweed; taken before and during plant-growing season.

Acarizax[™] for house dust mite allergy is given year-round.

When will I experience improvement?

In 1 to 3 years

For GRASTEK[®], ORALAIR[®] and RAGWITEK[®] onset of improvement occurs during the first pollen season.

For Acarizax[™] onset of improvement is 8 to 14 weeks.

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What's Are the Medical Benefits of Allergen Immunotherapy?

Benefit	Allergy Shots	Allergy Tablets
Reduces allergy symptoms	x	x
Reduces need for allergy medications	x	x
Improves quality of life	x	x
Decrease the chance or worsening of asthma	x	x
Decreases the chance of new allergies	x	x
Doctor's office administration of medication	x	
At home medication administration		x
Ongoing clinical benefit after treatment	At least 3 years after treatment	2 years after treatment

What's Are the Medical Benefits of Allergen Immunotherapy?

Side Effect	Allergy Shots	Allergy Tablets
Site reactions (red, raised, swollen, itchy)	x	x
Very severe allergic reactions	Very rare: 1 in 2.5 million	Extremely rare: 1 in 1 billion

What Does Allergen Immunotherapy Cost?

Allergy Shots

Usually covered through private or government insurance plans. There may be a co-pay. Check with your provider.

Allergy Tablets

Usually covered through private or government insurance plans. There may be a co-pay. Check with your provider.

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Are you READY?

To make sure you understand the allergen immunotherapy decision you and your doctor have reached, make sure you are READY:

Risk-benefit: Are you clear about the benefits and risk of each allergen immunotherapy option?

Encouragement: Do you have enough support and advice to make a choice between the two allergen immunotherapy options?

Assuredness: Are you absolutely sure allergen immunotherapy is the best choice for you?

Duration: Is the schedule and duration of allergen immunotherapy clear to you?

Yes: Are you prepared with an epinephrine auto-injector and know how and when to use it?

If you answer “no” to one or more of these READY questions, ask your allergist for more information.

Congratulations!

Working together using this tool, you and your doctor should have reached a decision about whether you should proceed with allergen immunotherapy and which options suits you best.

Please be sure to express any additional questions or concerns you have with your allergist before you agree on a final treatment option.