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SPECIALIZING IN THE EVALUATION  
AND MANAGEMENT OF  
ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA  
IN ADULTS AND CHILDREN

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# ALLERGEN IMMUNOTHERAPY

## PURPOSE

Your **individualized** course of allergy shots (immunotherapy) is designed to decrease your allergic sensitivities. The vast majority of allergic patients (80-90%) will experience substantial reductions in their symptoms over time (months to years). Many also reduce or eliminate the need for other medications. **Together with avoidance of offending allergens and medication, allergy shots represent one of the three basic treatments for allergic rhinitis, allergic conjunctivitis and asthma.** Allergy shots are not useful for food/drug allergies or non-allergic conditions like infections.

## TREATMENT DURATION

The length of a treatment course varies on a case by case basis but in general a course requires 3 to 5 years for completion. Initially the treatments can be given more frequently but as times goes on this can be adjusted. Treatment sets are mailed to you every 6 weeks. Generally the injections are continued for one to two years after symptoms have disappeared completely or have subsided to their lowest possible level. The total duration of therapy varies considerably from patient to patient. Some require treatments for many years while others do not. During your treatment you will be re-evaluated frequently by your physician. These visits will occur at least annually.

## SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTRATION

Your series of injections begins at a low dose selected by your physician based on your skin test results and history. Each shot is contained in a single dose vial and although each contain approximately the same volume of fluid the actual strength of the extract steadily increases with each consecutively numbered vial until the High Dose is reached. Your High Dose is the maintenance dose you will stay on for the duration of your treatment course unless it is changed by your physician. These High Dose vials are not numbered. Maintenance therapy can be continued if you are pregnant **BUT** notify your OAAC physician when you become pregnant.

We commonly build shots in three different formats. Your physician will help you decide which is right for you. Most common is the weekly building schedule. To reach the High Dose concentration faster some patients take the shots twice a week. Both of these methods have the least chances for systemic reactions. A third less common format is called RUSH therapy. It is associated with significantly more side effects (see below) and is not for every patient. However, it does bring you to the High Dose level in a month rather than slowly over many months. This is an advantage for some patients.

## SAFETY

**All allergy shots carry some risks for severe anaphylactic reactions. Therefore we strongly urge that the injections be administered only by medically competent personnel in a health care facility.** Weekly or twice weekly shots from our clinic carry a risk of anaphylaxis of 0.015 to 0.02% of injections compared to nationally published risks of 0.1 to 0.3% of reactions. RUSH therapy carries a nationally published risk of almost 40% of shots whereas our RUSH risk is closer to 10% of injections. This marked increase in risk however makes RUSH therapy unacceptable for many patients.