



"Serving the Allergy Profession Since 1962"

MEDIC-SAVOURÉ LIMITED

IMMUNOTHERAPY

THE NATURAL CHOICE

UNDERSTANDING THE
BASICS OF ALLERGY INJECTIONS



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WHAT IS ALLERGY?

In Canada, almost 20% of the population suffers from at least one significant allergy. In fact, allergies affect more people than any other single health problem. What exactly is an allergy? The term allergy is from two Greek words; *allos* - other and *ergos* - action. **Allergy is an abnormal immune response, a "kink" in our immune system.** It is an inherited physical condition of unusual sensitivity which certain individuals may develop to substances that ordinarily do not cause problems. These substances, called allergens, can be inhaled, ingested, or contacted on the skin. Common allergens include house dust, dust mites, pollens, molds, animal danders, foods, insects, drugs and chemicals. Allergies are genetically passed from parents to children and although they do not necessarily affect every child in any family, they may develop at almost any time during life. Usually symptoms are not present immediately, and the hypersensitivity develops only after an earlier exposure has started what is known as an allergen-antibody reaction in the immune system. When the allergic individual is exposed to an allergen, the immune system mistakenly perceives the allergen as a harmful invader and produces protective antibodies (IgE) to defend itself. A classic case of mistaken identity! Once these antibodies are developed, the next time the allergen is detected, the antibodies signal the release of certain irritating chemicals in defense. One of these chemicals, histamine, causes irritation in the sensitive tissues which results in the allergic symptoms. The most frequently affected areas are:

1. respiratory tract (involving the nose, sinuses, bronchial tubes)
2. skin (causing eczema or hives)
3. eyes and ears
4. digestive tract (with cramping, diarrhea, bloating)

Symptoms may range from sneezing, coughing, congested nose and itchy eyes to life threatening reactions called anaphylaxis.

IMMUNOTHERAPY

Immunotherapy (often referred to as hyposensitization, desensitization or "allergy shots") was first used in 1911 by Noon and Freeman. Using selected allergens which have been identified by allergy testing or history, small doses are administered at regular intervals just under the skin. Each dose is slightly larger than the previous one and gradually the immune response results in a build-up of protective "blocking" antibodies (IgG). These antibodies are capable of blocking the allergic response and therefore lessen sensitivity and control allergic symptoms. **In contrast to symptomatic treatment with oral medications, which give a few hours of relief at a time, immunotherapy is often able to provide long lasting relief and greatly reduce the need for other medications.** Also, it is felt that because immunotherapy targets the immune system (where the allergic problem originates), one is more likely to prevent the possible progression in the severity of the allergy or the development of asthma.

****Results of 22 placebo controlled studies of the effect of immunotherapy in allergic rhinitis and asthma**

Beneficial Effect	No Effect
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20 studies	2 studies
*n = 834	n = 80

* n = number of patients

****Aas K. Immunotherapy of bronchial asthma in:
Lichtenstein LM, Austen FK. Asthma: physiology,
immunopharmacology and treatment, Vol.2**

INDICATIONS FOR IMMUNOTHERAPY

Immunotherapy has been found to be beneficial in the following indications:

- Pollen induced rhinitis/conjunctivitis (often called "hay fever")
- House dust/mite allergies
- Allergy induced asthma
- Allergic rhinitis/conjunctivitis caused by molds
- Stinging and biting insect hypersensitivity
- Allergy to animal danders, especially cat and dog, although an effort to remove the pet first should be made.

TYPES OF IMMUNOTHERAPY

There are basically two types of immunotherapy recommended today:

1. **Perennial**: By far the most effective form of treatment due to maximum blocking antibody build-up. Increasing doses are given (usually weekly*) until the maximum tolerated dose is reached. This dose is then administered as a maintenance dose (usually every 3 or 4 weeks*) all year.

2. **Pre-seasonal**: Consisting of a series of injections prior to the problem season; this treatment is effective providing maximum tolerated dose is reached prior to the usual onset of symptoms. Injections are discontinued during or following the season only to be resumed at the same time the following year.

*Schedules may vary depending on patient's clinical response.

DURATION OF TREATMENT

"How long do I have to take my allergy shots?" This is probably one of the most frequently asked questions regarding immunotherapy. There are no firm rules regarding the duration of immunotherapy. **The sooner injections are started after the onset of symptoms, the shorter the period for immunotherapy.** Usually treatment is recommended for 3 to 5 years.

CONCLUSION

When an allergen cannot be avoided or when oral or inhaled medications are not viable or effective, immunotherapy is an effective form of allergy treatment. **An allergy is a defect in the immune system and immunotherapy is the only form of treatment which specifically targets the defect and modifies the immune response.** It is essential though that patients undertaking immunotherapy understand the importance of following treatment schedules if maximum benefits and relief are to be achieved.

Since its beginning in 1911, immunotherapy has provided relief for millions of allergy sufferers. With the advent of improved testing and treatment extracts and better methods of patient evaluation, immunotherapy will remain "*the natural choice*" for years to come. If you have any questions regarding your allergies or immunotherapy, please contact your physician.

MEDIC SAVOURÉ ALLERGY PRODUCTS

A.I.P... Aqueous Immunotherapy Prescriptions. Aqueous extracts for perennial allergy treatment. Recommended for multiple pollen or inhalant allergies. The standard of clinical effectiveness for more than 50 years.

ALUM-EX... Short course preseasonal treatment vaccine - Alum-ex preseasonal vaccines are specially formulated for patients suffering from seasonal allergies. (May also be used on a perennial basis.)

HOME ENVIRONMENTAL ALLERGY CONTROLS...

"Environmental control to reduce exposure to indoor allergies is a critical component of asthma management" - National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute.

Medic Savouré offers a full line of:

- Pillow/Mattress Encasings
- Hepa Air Cleaners
- Dust Control Solution

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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