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Adult and Pediatric Allergy
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Section A

Your allergist has suggested allergy immunotherapy as a treatment option. Allergy immunotherapy (allergy shots) contain water extracts of pollens, mold, mites, insects, or animal dander to which a patient has been shown to be allergic by skin testing. Venom allergy shots, as the name implies, are actual doses of a natural stinging insect venom or its purified components. Allergy immunotherapy works by gradually building antibodies and changing the cellular response that your body has to your allergies. Most people receive injections for five years, although some require shorter or longer periods of treatment depending on how quickly they respond. The injections are given weekly at first, and eventually this interval is lengthened.

Benefits of Immunotherapy:

- Better control of allergic rhinitis (hayfever).
- Better control of allergic asthma.
- Possible reduction in need and amount of allergy and asthma medications.
- Possible asthma prevention in children.
- Reduce infections.

With either type of injection, as with other substances injected into the body, there may be a "shot reaction". These generally are mild and include local reactions, mild systemic reactions, and severe systemic reactions. We place great emphasis on safety in our office. Since 1976, thousands of injections have been given each month. We have had no fatalities and only one complication requiring hospitalization.

Local reactions:

- Burning or itching at the injection site.
- Swelling or hives at the injection site.

Systemic reactions occur in less than 1% of injections. They usually are mild, but more reactions could possibly occur.

Mild systemic reactions:

- Nasal congestion and/or "runny nose" with itching of ears, nose, or throat and/or sneezing occurring within two hours of the injection.
- Itchy, watery or red eyes

Occasionally, more severe reactions include:

- Wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath.
- Generalized hives (welts).
- Swelling of tissue around the eyes, the tongue, or throat.
- Stomach or uterine (menstrual-type) cramps, possible miscarriage (if pregnant).

Rare complications are:

- Abnormalities of the heart beat.
- Loss of ability to maintain blood pressure and pulse.