

# TEXAS REGIONAL ASTHMA AND ALLERGY CENTER, L.L.P.

Board Certified specialists in allergy, asthma, immunology, and respiratory disorders

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## ALLERGY SHOT/IMMUNOTHERAPY PATIENT INFORMATION

We are happy to be able to serve your allergy and asthma health care needs. Enclosed you will find information for you to read and save for future reference. It includes answers to many questions you may have about immunotherapy, important rules we will ask you to follow for your safety, hours of operation, and other important information. If you have any questions or if we can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to ask us or call the office at (817) 421-0770 ext 131.

### ALLERGY SHOT HOURS

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b><u>SOUTHLAKE:</u></b>  |                           |
| <b>MONDAY</b>   | <b>8:00 AM – 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>TUESDAY</b>  | <b>8:00 AM – 4:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b>  | <b>8:00 AM – 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>THURSDAY</b>   | <b>7:30 AM – 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>FRIDAY</b>   | <b>8:00 AM – 11:30 AM</b> |
| <b><u>FORT WORTH/KELLER:</u></b>                                      |                           |
| <b>MONDAY</b>   | <b>8:00 AM – 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>TUESDAY</b>  | <b>8:00 AM – 4:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b>  | <b>8:00 AM – 6:00 PM</b>  |
| <b>THURSDAY</b>   | <b>8:00 AM – 4:30 PM</b>  |
| <b>FRIDAY</b>   | <b>8:00 AM – 11:30 AM</b> |
| <b>**FT WORTH/KELLER SHOT CLINIC CLOSSES FROM 11:30 AM- 1:00 PM**</b> |                           |

#### NOTE:

1. You don't need an appointment for allergy shots as long as you come in the office during these times so that we have enough time to give your injection and have 30 minutes to observe you for any reaction before we close.
2. You **must remain in the office so we can watch for any reactions for 30 minutes after your shot** and the nurse needs to look at your arm before you leave.
3. You must tell the nurse prior to getting your shot if you are on any NEW MEDICATIONS or if your asthma or allergies are not well controlled. Patients who are receiving Beta-blocker medications generally should not receive allergen immunotherapy.

### INSURANCE INFORMATION

Each insurance company pays allergy injections and allergy serum benefits according to their own reimbursement schedule. Our staff will not know your plan benefits. It is the responsibility of the patient to contact the insurance company to find out about allergy injection and allergy serum benefits, including the amount of the co-pay due at the time of service. Please verify this information prior to beginning immunotherapy. Not doing so could result in a large out of pocket expense.

If you choose to do RUSH (Rapid Desensitization) procedure, our insurance department will pre-certify the procedure and obtain benefits relative to the patient's insurance plan. Our staff will give benefits per your insurance company. We can not guarantee this information! This information should also be verified by the patient by calling your insurance carrier.

## **RECEIVING ALLERGY INJECTIONS AT ANOTHER PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE**

There are times when a patient may have to receive their allergy injections at another medical facility. It is the policy of Texas Regional Asthma and Allergy Center to overnight mail allergy serum to the physician's office that will be administering the serum. There will be a \$25-\$50 fee for this service payable prior to the serum being mailed. It is necessary for the physician agreeing to administer the allergy injections to sign the "*Request for the administration of allergy injections at an outside medical facility*" and fax the form back to this office prior to releasing any allergy serum. Please allow enough time for payment to be received and serum to be mixed and mailed.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ALLERGY TEST**

Skin tests are fairly reliable as an indication of allergy to inhaled substances but they are not perfect. It is important to match positive allergy tests with the time and characteristics of your symptoms and exposure to the allergen. For example, a positive skin test to horses is of no significance if you are not around horses. House dust mite and mold spores are found year-round in this area and can cause problems during all seasons. The intensity of these symptoms may vary by the time of the year, temperature, and humidity. Animal dander may produce chronic ongoing symptoms if exposure is on a regular basis as with a household pet. Since people are exposed at work and school to people who may have pets and thereby can have high levels of animal dander, children or employees may get allergy symptoms during the school year or while at work if they have no animals in their home. Pollens cause seasonal symptoms with peaks of difficulty being experienced when the offending plant is pollinating. Trees in this area pollinate in the early spring from February through May. Exceptions to this rule are Cedar Elm, which pollinates in the fall, and Mountain Cedar, which pollinates in the winter months. This unusual behavior of trees in our area allows for pollen to be found in Texas all twelve months of the year. Grass pollinates in the late spring and usually dominates pollen counts in May and June, though they can sometimes begin to pollinate as early as February and may continue pollinating on and off until the first frost in November. Most weeds pollinate in this part of the country in fall after the first rainfall, and continue until the first freeze.

## **WHAT IS IMMUNOTHERAPY?**

Immunotherapy is a treatment used to relieve allergy symptoms of hayfever or allergic asthma. This is done by administering injections of substances such as pollens, mold spores, dust mites, animal danders, or insects to which an individual has been found to be allergic by skin testing. The mechanisms of its effect are the subject of ongoing research. However, immunotherapy initiates processes that seem to 'turn off' the abnormal immune reaction that we term 'allergy'.

When an allergic person is exposed to an allergy-causing substance (such as cat dander), he or she may develop symptoms of sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, watery eyes, chest tightness, or wheezing. Various cells that line the nose in the airways actually release chemicals termed mediators that cause these symptoms. Inflammation of the tissues accompanies this process and leads to persistent symptoms. Immunotherapy works to interfere with this complex allergic interaction and keeps inflammation and symptoms from getting started. Immunotherapy helps to reduce the inflammatory reaction that produces symptoms.

### **How are injections given and for how long?**

During the 'build up' phase, increasing doses of allergy injections are given once or twice a week until a predetermined target or 'maintenance' dose is reached. Shots are usually administered every 1 – 4 weeks over the next several years of treatment. Symptom improvement with allergy shots usually occurs in the first year. In a small percentage of patients, there is no improvement and immunotherapy may be discontinued or the patient retested.

However, when symptoms do improve, injections are usually continued for 5 years of maintenance therapy. At that time, you and your doctor will make a joint decision about whether to discontinue injections or to continue treatment.

## Reactions to Immunotherapy

Local reactions (swelling, itching or tenderness at the site of the injection) may occur in most patients receiving injections. These local reactions usually subside in a day or less.

Large local reactions or systemic (whole body) reactions may occur in 1 – 5 percent of patients receiving allergy injections and usually occur during the build up phases, although they can occur at any point in time during the course of treatment. These reactions lead to a dosage adjustment. Generalized reactions may consist of any or all of the following symptoms: itchy eyes, nose or throat; runny nose; nasal congestion; sneezing; tightness in the throat or chest; coughing or wheezing. Also, lightheadedness, nausea, vomiting, hives and on rare occasions, shock (low blood pressure) may be experienced. Reactions can be serious, but rarely fatal.

Allergy injections should be administered at a medical facility with a physician present who is comfortable treating anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) since occasional reactions may require immediate therapy. As an added precaution, you must wait after each injection in the medical facility where you receive your injection. The wait time is **30 minutes for patients**. In the unlikely event of a generalized reaction (which could be serious or life-threatening), you will be quickly treated and observed. This will decrease the likelihood of a more severe reaction. **As a patient you must understand that not waiting your allotted time will result in our refusal to administer your allergy shot because of the potential risk of you having a severe reaction outside the medical facility!**

## Treatment of Reactions

Simple local reactions that consist of swelling, redness or tenderness at the site of the injection are best handled with simple measures such as a local cold compress and the use of medications such as antihistamines. However, at the first sign of a systemic reaction, adrenaline (epinephrine) is usually given to counteract the reaction.

**If you experience a generalized reaction from an allergy injection after leaving our facility, please either return to the office or proceed to the nearest emergency room.**

For questions or assistance, you may always call us at (817) 421 – 0770 ext 131.

## Sample Allergy Injection Schedule

This is just a sample, as all patients respond differently to treatment. The schedule will vary depending on whether or not the patient has undergone the RUSH procedure.

|                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| <b>YEAR 1</b>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> 24 shots (build up phase) | Once or twice weekly depending on the patient's schedule and preference.       |
|                | Maintenance phase                         | Once weekly for the rest of the year.  |
| <b>YEAR 2</b>  | Maintenance phase                         | Once every one to two weeks depending on response and the doctor's directions. |
| <b>YEAR 3+</b> | Maintenance phase                         | Monthly if needed.   |

**Allergy Injection Schedule**

This schedule is modified for RUSH patients.

| <b>Vial Gold<br/>1:5000<br/>dilution</b> | <b>Vial Green:<br/>1:500<br/>dilutions</b> | <b>Vial Blue:<br/>1:50 dilution</b> | <b>Vial Red:<br/>1:5 dilution</b> | <b>Vial Silver:<br/>1:1 Concentrate<br/>dilution</b> |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Dosage</b>                            | <b>Dosage</b>                              | <b>Dosage</b>                       | <b>Dosage</b>                     | <b>Dosage</b>  |
| .03                                      | .03  | .03                                 | .03                               | .03  |
| .06                                      | .06  | .06                                 | .06                               | .06  |
| .12                                      | .12  | .12                                 | .12                               | .12  |
| .20                                      | .20  | .20                                 | .20                               | .20  |
| .30                                      | .30  | .30                                 | .30                               | .25  |
|  |  |                                     | .50                               | .30  |
|  |  |                                     |                                   | .40  |
|  |  |                                     |                                   | .50 (maintenance)                                    |

\*\*\*Please note: During the maintenance phase, allergy re-testing may be done at the provider’s discretion to determine dose and interval for final phase.

**IMPORTANT PATIENT GROUND RULES  
TO FOLLOW DURING IMMUNOTHERAPY!!!**

**Safety is our greatest concern and should also be yours. Following these rules will significantly decrease the risk of you having an allergic reaction during allergy shots, and will make your treatment as safe as possible.**

1. You must wait **at least 30 minutes** after your injection(s). If you have any of the following symptoms during the waiting period, report them immediately to the allergy nurse so that appropriate treatment may be instituted: itchy eyes/nose/throat, runny nose, nasal stuffiness, sneezing, tightness in the throat or chest, wheezing, hives, faintness, dizziness, nausea or stomach cramps.
2. There are instances when an allergy injection will NOT be given.
  1. If you have a fever.
  2. If your asthma is not well controlled.
  3. If you are experiencing a significant flare of your allergy symptoms.
  4. If you are taking a beta blocker medication.
3. **Always** tell the nurse if you have started any new medications. **It is your responsibility** to inform the nurse of this prior to getting your allergy injection(s). **Certain medications taken during immunotherapy may be unsafe and make it very difficult to treat an allergic reaction (such as Beta-blocker medications).**
4. **Avoid aerobic activity for 1 hour prior to your allergy injection and 2 hours after the injection.** This may minimize the risk of a systemic reaction.

5. In order to achieve the greatest benefit, allergy shots should be given on a regular basis, **at least once a week.**
6. Initially you may come 2 times per week in order to build up to your maintenance dose sooner. When coming twice a week, please allow 48 hours between each injection. i.e. Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday or Thursday. This may continue until you reach .12 ml of your concentrate serum.
7. Your physician will determine how long you will remain on your weekly maintenance dose before increasing the interval of shots. **Regular visits with your provider will facilitate this process.**
8. Allergy injections will be given in alternating arms each time, and the dose will increase gradually if there is no previous reaction.
9. Taking an antihistamine on shot days and the day following your injection may minimize the occurrence or severity of any reaction to your shots. Please discuss this with your provider.
10. **At the end of the waiting period, be sure to check out with the allergy nurse prior to leaving the office, even if you have no local reactions or allergy symptoms.**

**NOTE: If you have any questions regarding your injections, these instructions, your symptoms and/or have anything that you are unsure of, please do not hesitate to ask or call the office at 817-421-0770 ext 131.**

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