

Immunotherapy

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What can be treated

Allergies to dust mites, grass and weed pollens and cats and dogs are the most effectively treated by immunotherapy. A horse allergy can also be treated. Treatment for mould allergies can be disappointing. Treatment for food allergies is still a work in progress.

Immunotherapy has been used to treat airborne allergies for more than a century. It can be achieved through giving daily drops under the tongue (sublingual) or monthly injections under the skin (subcutaneous) usually in the upper arm but not into the muscle.

Immunotherapy is disease modifying and the duration of benefit exceeds the treatment period by 3 to 4 times or even longer in many instances. It improves the quality of life in treated individuals through reduction in symptoms and medication usage of nasal sprays and antihistamines and far fewer tissues are used. It reduces the seasonal increases in specific antibodies and in non-specific airway hyper-reactivity.

The benefits of immunotherapy are greatest for the allergic reactions in the nose and the eyes with a lesser benefit for asthma and eczema.

Irritation of the upper airway can be multifactorial and can involve not only allergic reactions but also dietary sensitivity and gastrointestinal reflux.

Before you start

There are some major issues to consider at the beginning before ordering the solutions.

- ♥ The time commitment – 3 to 5 years with monthly injections being given at a local doctor's surgery.
- ♥ The cost – this will be modified by the type of treatment and the allergens that need to be targeted. The least expensive is monotherapy against dust mites or pollens but once there are a couple to treat the cost increases.
- ♥ The role of allergy v diet in the symptoms so that you're not disappointed with the results.

The immunotherapy will work to reduce the allergic component in an individual and, in most individuals, there are obvious benefits within 6 months and more at 12 months. If the benefits are not obvious it's time to rethink the trigger for the symptoms. It is important to have 6-12 month reviews with your Allergist for this reason.

Ordering the solutions

Currently the treatment solutions are ordered from Europe or Canada. They can take up to 12 weeks to arrive. Payment is made at the time of ordering and the solutions are delivered to the practice and the first shot/s are given at the practice. The package is then taken to the local doctor.

There is a reminder about re-ordering in the initial schedule but it's always a good idea to keep reminders in your calendar. Further instructions will be given once treatment is started.

The nature of solutions.

There are a few different forms of treatment.

In the past the solutions were a time-tested dilution of dust mites, cat or dog allergen or grass pollens either in an aqueous solution or alum-bound to reduce the rate of absorption from the test site. These are still available but are rarely offered to our patients and only in the instance that their required allergen is only available in this form.

The aqueous solutions have been associated with a high risk of allergic reactions including anaphylaxis and half the time these severe reactions requiring adrenaline occurred more than half an hour after the injections.

More recently a new form of the allergen has been developed and this is called an allergoid. This involves modifying the structure of the allergen by a chemical "cooking" process and the changes are akin to using heat to change raw egg into cooked egg and much less likely to trigger a severe reaction. The benefits of this change in the structure are a faster build-up to maintenance and a reduced rate of the risk of a severe reaction. Some, but not all studies, have suggested these changes reduce efficacy as the allergen solutions are not as potent. However, the safety profile is outstanding and makes it the treatment of our choice especially in children.

Assessment

At the initial assessment you'll be checked for asthma. If you have asthma the symptoms must be treated and stable. Where there's a lot of lower airway inflammation at the time of the injection, there is a risk of a severe and difficult to treat reaction should there be a reaction to the immunotherapy (usually within an hour of the shot).

You'll also be asked to complete a form to have as a record of the symptoms, so progress can be evaluated objectively.

If you are stable at the start of the injections, then you will be referred back to your regular family doctor for ongoing injections and then seen at 6 months and then 12 monthly intervals. Again, these review appointments are very important to stick to.

It is highly recommended to take a dose of non-drowsy antihistamine 30 minutes before an injection reduces the risk of minor reactions at the time of the injection.

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Checklist

Once you are ready to start:

Email this document signed together with payment card details to: order@qldallergy.com

QAS Payment \$65.00 is processed from your card and orders sent and you will get a receipt and further information. Please see your original email for how the remainder of the payment needs to be organised at each company is different.

When the solutions arrive (up to 12 weeks after the order) you will be notified, and an appointment will be arranged.

About 30 minutes before the appointment take one or two non-drowsy antihistamine tablets

At first appointment you will:

- have a lung function test
- have a review of asthma treatment if present
- be given the first injection/s
- be given a letter about the treatment and the same letter will be sent to your GP
- be given the solutions to take to your GP – they need to be kept at 2-8C but will be fine out of the fridge for several hours
- book a review for 6 months

If there are any issues that arise the GP can contact us in writing via medical objects or order@qldallergy.com

Treatments & prices:

	PRODUCT	COMPANY	FEE TO COMPANY per batch	QAS PROCESSING FEE
	DIATER	FERRER PHARMA	\$450.00	\$65.00
	ALXOID	AMSL	\$289.90	\$65.00
	ALUTEK	AMSL	\$289.90	\$65.00
	CLUSTEK MAX	AMSL	\$399.90	\$65.00
	ORALTEK	AMSL	\$249.90	\$65.00
	ALUM	GAMMA ALLERGY	\$318.00	\$65.00
	AQUEOUS	GAMMA ALLERGY	\$248.00	\$65.00

Please note:

Prices for solutions and cost and handling may vary over time.

There can be treatment shortages, delays and transit damages along the way. Every effort is made to make the process as smooth as possible.

By signing this form, you acknowledge you have read and understand the information and wish to proceed with payment and ordering of the treatment.

Cancellations must be made within 24 hours of making the order otherwise a refund will not be possible either for the treatments from the supplier or the processing and handling of the order by Queensland Allergy Services.

Patient Name _____

DOB _____

Signature _____
(patient or guardian)

Date: / /