

## Allergy Treatment Options

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What is the best way to treat your allergies? We offer a number of options to explore—from managing symptoms to treating the root cause through immunotherapy. We can help you explore the benefits of each so you can choose which option is best for you.

**Lifestyle adjustments** – Dietary adjustments and environmental control measures to reduce exposure to indoor and outdoor allergens are critical to reducing your symptoms. Based on your allergic profile, we can offer guidance to help you address those items that affect you most.

**Medication** – Various medications can improve or relieve allergy systems. This includes over-the-counter or prescription pills and nasal sprays. Side effects are possible and can be discussed with your doctor. Medications may be needed life long, or as long as systems persist, but many patients report decreased medication use after immunotherapy begins.

**Immunotherapy** – The only way to change underlying allergic disease is immunotherapy, or desensitization, which builds your immune system's tolerance to allergens over time. This treatment can be administered in two forms.

**Allergy injections (allergy shots)** – For patients age five and over, a series of injections are typically given for a three- to five-year period. Most patients visit the office weekly for the first six to twelve months; every two weeks the second year; every three weeks the third year, etc. Consistency is critical. Injections are typically withheld from patients who are ill. In very rare cases, anaphylaxis or an exaggerated allergic reaction that can include difficulty breathing and a severe drop in blood pressure can occur with allergy injections. Because it can occur at any time during treatment, even in patients receiving maintenance doses, we ask patients to wait 20 minutes after receiving injections before leaving the office. A physician is available in the office while treatment is given. Most insurance companies cover injections and the medication vial, though co-pays may apply. You should verify your insurance coverage prior to beginning treatment.

**Sublingual immunotherapy (allergy drops)** – Allergy drops work much like allergy shots, slowly desensitizing you to what causes your allergic reaction, but they're delivered under your tongue in a liquid form that you can safely take at home. As with allergy shots, most patients taking allergy drops find their treatments take three to five years to complete. While some patients feel relief in just a few weeks, it's important to continue taking your drops until otherwise instructed to ensure long-term benefit. Drops are custom-formulated based on the results of your allergy tests. Your drops will be ready within two weeks and our staff will instruct you on how to administer and store the drops. Most patients will only need a few office visits each year to assess progress. Sublingual drops can safely and effectively treat a broad range of allergies including foods and mold. Because of their safety profile, allergy drops can be an option for all patients including young children. For your convenience, allergy drop refills can be mailed to you. Most insurance companies will pay for the testing and office visits, but not for the drops. Most patients agree this temporary investment is well worth the improvement in their health, reduction in allergy related expenses (co-pays for other medications, missed work and school time, and other related expenses) and overall quality of life. Treatment is an expense that can be reimbursed through Health Saving Accounts (HSA) or Flex plans.

