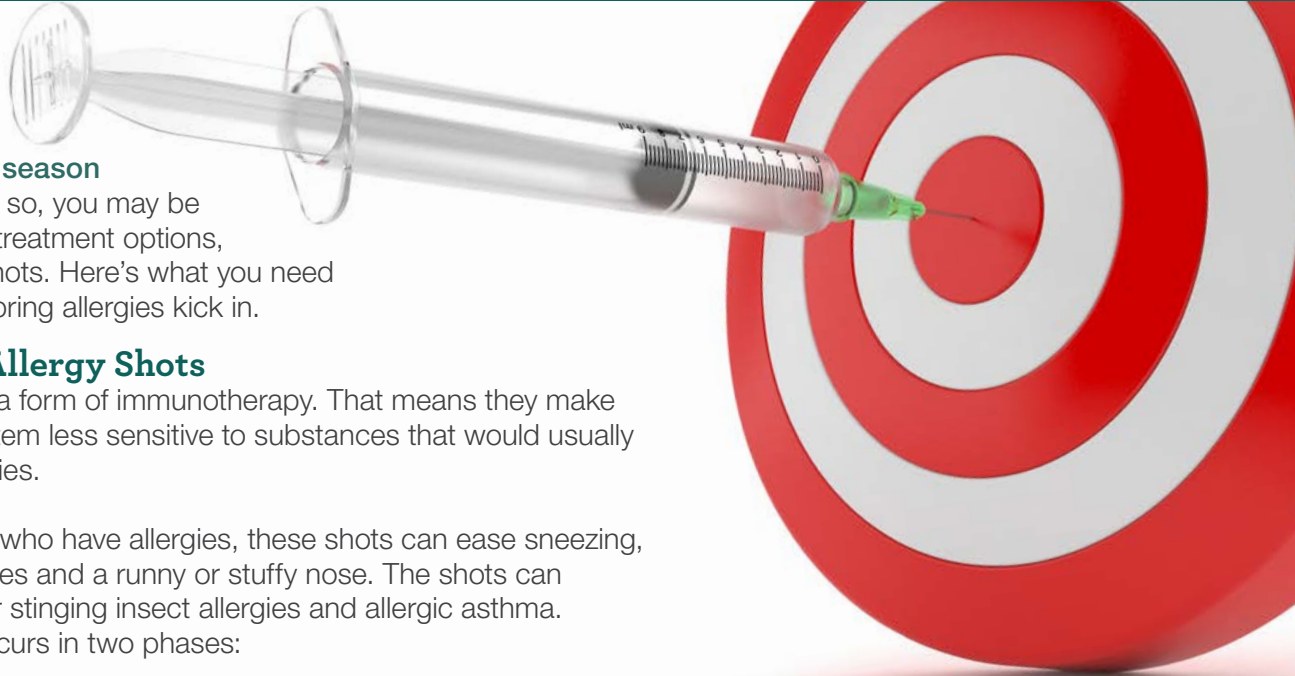


Taking a Shot at Allergy Shots



Was last allergy season

brutal for you? If so, you may be considering new treatment options, such as allergy shots. Here's what you need to know before spring allergies kick in.

Snapshot of Allergy Shots

Allergy shots are a form of immunotherapy. That means they make your immune system less sensitive to substances that would usually trigger your allergies.

For many people who have allergies, these shots can ease sneezing, itchy or watery eyes and a runny or stuffy nose. The shots can also be helpful for stinging insect allergies and allergic asthma. The treatment occurs in two phases:

1 Buildup phase: You get an allergy shot once or twice per week. The shots contain gradually increasing doses of an allergy-causing substance. This helps your immune system slowly build up a tolerance to it.

Duration: Three to six months

2 Maintenance phase: In this stage, the shots can be spaced farther apart. Typically, you get an allergy shot every two to four weeks.

Duration: Three to five years

Allergy shots often provide lasting relief from allergy symptoms, even after you complete the treatment and stop getting the shots. They can also prevent new allergies from starting. But the response varies from person to person.

Another Treatment Option

Sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) is another form of immunotherapy. In SLIT, you put a tablet containing an allergy-causing substance under your tongue, where it dissolves. Typically, you take a tablet every day. SLIT is only available to treat allergies to dust mites or to specific kinds of ragweed or grass pollen. For these allergies, SLIT works about as well as allergy shots.

Ask your doctor whether allergy shots or SLIT may be right for you. With allergy season coming up, the chance for relief is nothing to sneeze at.

Watch and Learn

For videos on allergy shots and SLIT, go to <http://aaaai.execinc.com/videos/Allergy-Videos.asp> and scroll down to Treatment.

Sources include American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology and American Academy of Family Physicians.