

## Allergy Shots and Eczema

Allergies are the most common cause for chronic nasal congestion in children. An estimated one third of all Americans suffer from allergies in one form or another. For some people allergy shots are an effective way to manage their eczema flare-ups. A general practitioner will often provide a referral to an allergist for a patient with eczema. An allergist is a doctor who is trained in helping pinpoint the source of a patient's allergy and then in helping the person treat the symptoms, thereby reducing the frequency of flare-ups.

Allergy shots are a form of allergy and asthma treatment in which increasing, controlled doses of an allergen are injected into a patient over a period of time. The goal in using allergy shots is to increase a patient's natural ability to tolerate a particular allergen, while simultaneously, decreasing the symptoms that result from an allergic reaction.

Allergy shots, also known as allergen immunotherapy, are similar to a vaccination. They serve to increase the ability of the immune system to work properly. The stronger the immune system is, the easier time it will have blocking an allergic reaction. An allergic reaction occurs when the body mistakes a common, harmless substance for an invader. When the body is exposed to the invader, it undertakes a series of chemical reactions as protection. As long as the person administering them is a trained professional, allergy shots can be both effective as well as safe and can be successfully used on children as young as four or five years of age.

Some people believe in the effectiveness of allergy shots in the control of eczema while others are less impressed with the results. Research into allergy shots as treatment for eczema has shown that in some cases they can cause worsening of the symptoms. However, allergy shots have been found to be beneficial in treating other problems such as allergic rhinitis also known as hay fever, the symptoms of which are a runny nose, sneezing and watery eyes; breathing problems relating to asthma and symptoms accompanying an insect sting allergy.

Allergy shots contain a purified form of the suspected allergen. Customarily, the shots are given to a sufferer throughout the year, over a five-year span of time. The allergy shot dosage begins small and then increases gradually over the first four to six months, little by little. After that time the dosage levels off to what is called a maintenance dose. This amount is then administered to the patient for up to a period of three years.

It is necessary to go for your allergy shots once or twice weekly at the start of treatment. The dose begins slower, gradually increasing to allow the immune system to become accustomed to it as well as to allow it time to begin to build an immunity to the substance. This is often called the buildup phase. Once this is reached, the aforementioned maintenance dose is administered and then the frequency shots begins to decline. It goes from a weekly shot, to bi-weekly, and then, in many cases, to a monthly shot.

Allergy shots have been found be more effective on some allergens than others. For example, they are most effective on inhaled allergens such as pet fur, dust, pollens, and mold. That may offer explanation as to why hay fever and asthma would respond better to allergy shots than eczema.