Treatment of reactions

If you experience mild reactions to sublingual immunotherapy, an antihistamine should be taken. If symptoms worsen, call 911. If you have any questions, please call ENT Specialists, PC at 402-397-0670.

Is Sublingual Immunotherapy safe?

Sublingual immunotherapy is a very safe allergy treatment for both adults and children. Numerous published scientific studies have confirmed sublingual immunotherapy is both safe and effective for the treatment of allergic rhinitis and asthma caused by allergies to dust mites, grass, ragweed, cat dander and tree pollens. Evidence is emerging that sublingual therapy may be effective for treating red, itchy eyes caused by pollen during hay fever season. Additionally, it has shown signs of being an effective therapy for children with mild atopic dermatitis (eczema) and is currently being studied for its potential in treating food allergies.

Why is Sublingual Immunotherapy not yet FDA Approved?

Multiple studies are currently being conducted for the purpose of trying to get sublingual therapy approved in the United States. The extracts that are used in preparing sublingual therapy are the same extracts that are used in skin testing and in traditional allergy shots. These extracts are approved and monitored by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and approved for allergy shots, but not specifically for use under the tongue. Therefore, allergy drops are considered an off-label use of the FDA-approved allergen extracts. Many medications are commonly used in an FDA off-label manner when a physician determines it is best for treatment of the patient.1

Sublingual immunotherapy has been used for many years in Europe, South America, Asia and Australia and has been proven safe and effective in numerous studies, which will likely lead to one or more allergy extract manufacturers obtaining an FDA indication for allergy drops in the near future. The World Health Organization has endorsed sublingual immunotherapy as a viable alternative to injection immunotherapy 2. Sublingual immunotherapy is also supported by the World Allergy Association and the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

References


ALLERGIES & SUBLINGUAL IMMUNOTHERAPY

Board Certified Otolaryngologists
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Allergic rhinitis occurs when the body’s immune system over-responds to specific particles such as plant pollens, molds, dust mites, animal hair, foods, medicines and more. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis may include sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, nasal drainage and itchy eyes. There is a close relationship between allergic rhinitis and sinusitis. Sinusitis is often preceded by rhinitis.

Why Sublingual Immunotherapy?

People with documented allergic disease by allergy testing may be considered for sublingual immunotherapy. Young children have been shown to tolerate and benefit from sublingual immunotherapy, as have older adults.

Medications such as antihistamines and nasal sprays treat symptoms of allergic rhinitis and other allergy-related disorders whereas immunotherapy induces a natural immunity or tolerance to the allergen. The gradual introduction of the “causative allergen” to the allergic patient reduces the allergic symptoms and lessens the need for medications. Sometimes the need for medications can be eliminated altogether.

Sublingual immunotherapy is an alternative to subcutaneous therapy (allergy shots). The immunologic changes seen after sublingual immunotherapy administration are similar to those seen after subcutaneous immunotherapy. It is a more convenient and comfortable form of allergy therapy. It does not involve injections or weekly visits to the doctor’s office.

Benefits of Sublingual Immunotherapy

- Sublingual immunotherapy has been shown in multiple studies to be effective in treating allergic rhinitis in both adults and children. Other countries have been using this therapy to treat allergic rhinitis for many years.
- Sublingual immunotherapy has been shown to be helpful in asthma and in preventing the development of new sensitivities to allergens.
- Sublingual immunotherapy is very safe. If a reaction occurs, it is usually very mild.
- Sublingual immunotherapy does not involve the use of needles.
- Sublingual immunotherapy allows for administration to be performed at home, so frequent, time-consuming clinic visits are not required.

Drawbacks of Allergy Drops

- Takes approximately 3-6 months to experience benefits and requires you to continue medication during the build-up/escalation phase.
- Insurance companies generally do not cover sublingual immunotherapy.

Reactions to Immunotherapy

The safety of sublingual immunotherapy is well documented, and serious reactions are very rare. Mild reactions, such as an itchy mouth, occur in the majority of people and tend to resolve over time. The following is a review of reactions:

- There is a possibility of having an anaphylaxis reaction, but reactions are usually mild with sublingual immunotherapy.
- At the present time, there have been no fatalities reported from sublingual immunotherapy treatment.
- Swelling of the tongue or lips may occur (if this occurs, take an antihistamine).
- Itching of the mouth may occur temporarily.
- Gastrointestinal discomfort (usually mild).