

## **Sublingual Immunotherapy (Allergy Drops)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is sublingual immunotherapy?**

Sublingual immunotherapy, or SLIT, refers to the process of reducing allergen sensitivity using drops of allergen placed under (*sub-*) the tongue (*lingual*). Similar to allergy shots, using these allergy drops over time results in better allergen tolerance, dramatically decreasing symptoms and medication use.

#### **How Do I Take Allergy Drops?**

Using the supplied metered pump, place the drops under your tongue. Leave drops in place under the tongue for 2 minutes, then swallow. This is repeated daily throughout the entire treatment course.

#### **How Long Should I Expect My Vial to Last?**

Each treatment vial is calculated to last about 3 months when used in a standard fashion.

#### **Need I Refrigerate My Vial?**

In order to best preserve potency, we recommend keeping your vial refrigerated whenever possible. Since the antigens are very stable as mixed, they will retain their potency if left kept at room temperature for a limited time.

#### **How Do I Order a New Vial?**

Please order a new vial when you have 4 weeks' worth of remaining drops. You can order by submitting a request via your Follow My Health patient portal account. Please allow 5-7 days for us to process your order, mix your treatment vial, and have it mailed out to you.

#### **What Do I Do If I Forget to Take My Drops for a Few Days to One Week?**

If you forget to take your drops for up to 7 days, you may continue as you were before. If more than one week has elapsed since your last drops, please consult your instruction sheet or call the allergy department.

### **What are the Side Effects from Allergy Drops?**

Tingling or itching in the mouth is the most common side effect, but is mild and self-limiting. In rare cases, mild nausea or other infrequent, short-lived abdominal discomfort can occur as well. As long as these symptoms are minor and resolve quickly, you may continue with your drops as prescribed. If minor reactions occur, contact our office for instructions.

In very rare cases, more significant side effects such as breathing difficulties or swelling may be experienced. If any reaction is more worrisome, use your EpiPen® and immediately proceed to the nearest emergency room.

### **How Long Will It Take to Notice an Improvement After Starting Drops?**

In some patients, symptom improvement may be experienced in as little as several weeks. The average time is 3-6 months.

### **How Long Will Treatment Last?**

Both allergy shots and drops work by permanently changing your immune system—essentially immunizing you against your own allergies. The goal of treatment is to get allergy relief that lasts for years after the shot or drop treatment course is complete. On average, this takes 3-5 years of treatment to achieve.

### **How Important Is It to Use the Drops Daily?**

SLIT has been shown to significantly decrease allergy symptoms and allergy medication use, as well as to significantly improve allergy-related quality of life. The size of each dose as well as the frequency at which they are administered plays a large role in how much symptoms are improved. As such, using the drops sporadically or less than prescribed may result in sub-optimal improvement in allergy symptoms.

### **Do I need to have an EpiPen® Available While on Allergy Drops?**

Systemic reactions while on SLIT are exceedingly rare. However, as your safety is of the utmost importance to us, we will prescribe and recommend you have available an EpiPen® while undergoing treatment.

### **Can I Switch Between Allergy Drops & Shots?**

Yes, in some circumstances a change can be made. In general, we discourage this practice as it will increase the treatment duration. Retesting may be necessary in some cases. Please contact the allergy department with any specific questions.

### **Is Sublingual Immunotherapy approved by the FDA?**

Allergy drops are mixed from the exact same FDA-approved natural allergen extracts as allergy shots, but are used in a method (under the tongue) that is considered “off-label” by the FDA.

Sublingual drops have been the favored route of allergy immunotherapy in Europe for decades. SLIT’s safety and efficacy has been proven by scores of research studies and hundreds of thousands of successfully treated patients in the U.S. and abroad.

### **Is Sublingual Immunotherapy covered by insurance?**

While most plans offer benefits for allergy shots, sublingual immunotherapy is not covered by insurance. With SLIT, there are no allergy shot co-pays and no repeat trips to the office to get those shots. SLIT’s out-of-pocket expenses are usually made up for in convenience (fewer work hours missed, no transportation costs, etc.).

### **Can I use a Medical Flexible Spending Plan or HAS to pay for Sublingual Immunotherapy?**

Yes. Even though insurance will not cover SLIT, you can still use pre-tax dollars from a Medical Flexible Spending Account or from an HSA to pay for SLIT. This can be a significant savings over paying out-of-pocket.