

AXIOM
ALLERGY VET

"For Allergy Testing In Cat, Dog & Horse"

Immunotherapy For Control Of Allergies In Your Pets

*Pet owner information
from "The Quality Clinical
Pathology Service"*



What is Immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is a medical treatment where allergens (pollens, moulds mites, epidermals) to which your pet is allergic are injected into your pet in increasing amounts and concentrations.

After immunotherapy, up to 90% of dogs experience changes in their immune system and become less sensitive to these allergens. From the results of the allergy test and history, immunotherapy treatments can be formulated which contain the specific allergens identified as causing the skin problems in your pet. This is the safest way to control the clinical signs of allergy.

How are the Immunotherapy Injections given?

You and your Veterinary Surgeon will decide whether it is appropriate for you to administer the immunotherapy at home or whether you would prefer to take your pet to the clinic for injections. The dosage schedule is included with the immunotherapy treatment set, and complete instructions for giving the injections are included. The needles used to administer the immunotherapy injections are much smaller than the ones used for annual booster vaccines. Immunotherapy injections are small quantities of fluid (the allergen in a fluid preservative) given underneath the skin (subcutaneously). The majority of dogs do not object to these injections, especially if they are rewarded after each injection.

What supplies will I need?

You will be given the treatment vial(s), syringes and a dosage schedule. Please refrigerate the treatment vial(s) immediately to maintain the potency of the allergens. Use a new syringe for each injection. Ask your Veterinary Surgeon for the best method of disposal for used syringes.

When is the best time to give the Injection?

The best time to administer the immunotherapy injection is when you will be home for at least one hour after giving the injection. Also, it is best that your dog or cat is not heavily exercised or fed for one hour before or after the injection. If possible, give the injection when your local Veterinary Surgery is open (for the rare instance of an adverse reaction) or be aware of the location of the nearest emergency clinic.

Is Immunotherapy safe for my pet?

Yes, immunotherapy is the safest way to control allergic signs in your pet. As with any injection there is a very slight chance of a reaction to the injection. If you notice any unusual signs following an immunotherapy injection, such as heavy breathing, vomiting, diarrhoea, collapse or sudden lumps over the body, contact your veterinary surgeon immediately who will advise you on any necessary action.

Are there other reactions to watch for in my pet?

Some increase in itchiness is normal during the initial phase of immunotherapy. Some pets will also show increased itchiness immediately after starting injections from a new treatment vial. Contact your Veterinary Surgeon to discuss any reaction(s) that you notice while your pet is on immunotherapy.

How soon can I expect to see some improvement from my pet's immunotherapy?

Every animal is an individual and just like people will respond differently to a given medication. On average it takes three to four months of therapy before improvement is seen, although some owners report seeing some improvement following the initial injection! It takes time, however, for your pet's immune system to change and become tolerant. In most cases, the allergy has been present for months or even years prior to starting immunotherapy.

Be patient! Continue with immunotherapy until the initial vial is completed (approximately 6 months) to give your pet time to improve.

Can my pet receive other medications while on Immunotherapy?

Your Veterinary Surgeon may elect to use medications such as antihistamines, steroids and shampoos to help keep your pet comfortable during the early stages (first 3-4 months) of immunotherapy, when there are concurrent skin problems, or at times of high exposure to allergens. Do not consider immunotherapy a failure because of the need to use occasional medications. One of the effects of immunotherapy is to reduce the dependency on, not necessarily eliminate the need for, other drugs. Like many chronic diseases, allergies can be controlled but not cured.

How often will my pet require Immunotherapy injections?

Generally, allergies are a lifelong problem that can be controlled but not cured. Once your pet's skin disease is controlled, or during the cooler months of the year, you may find that you can increase the time period between maintenance injections. In general, pets that do well on immunotherapy will slowly relapse if the injections are stopped. Immunotherapy injections may be required for the life of the pet. When the initial treatment is completed you should discuss the case with your Veterinary Surgeon who will order a further vial if there has been a satisfactory response. Your pet's immunotherapy is individualised, so please phone your Veterinary Surgeon one month before you need a new vial.

What if my pet is not doing well on Immunotherapy?

A small percentage of dogs and cats do not respond to immunotherapy even though they are genuinely allergic. Your Veterinary Surgeon will advise on alternative methods of control. In other cases, poor response may be due to concurrent or complicating skin disease. It is important that you work closely with your Veterinary Surgeon. The problem may be as simple as flea infestation (there is currently no effective flea immunotherapy), bacterial infection, seborrhoea, or other treatable condition. In other cases it may be necessary to change the contents, dosage or concentration of the immunotherapy.

Are there other measures that may help my allergic pet?

AT the time your pet begins immunotherapy you will receive a list of the allergens to which your pet reacted. The following list outlines environmental measures that you may take to help minimise your pet's exposure to certain allergens. Remember, most allergens are airborne so placing your pet in a glass bubble is the only way to eliminate them completely. In spite of this, you can significantly help your allergic pet by making some simple lifestyle changes.

Allergen: House Dust Mite

Put a plastic zippered cover over the pet's bed.

Wash bedding in hot water (>70°C) or place bean bags in the deep freeze to kill and denature mites: Allow bedding to thoroughly dry. Aeration and drying in sunlight will kill house dust mites.

Do not allow your pet to sleep on furniture or your bed.

Avoid stuffed toys.

Bed on cotton in uncarpeted rooms.

Allergen: Mould

Keep out of damp basement.

Keep away from barns, compost heaps and leaf litter in woodlands.

Avoid dusty foods.

Keep out of conservatories and greenhouses, bathrooms and other rooms with high humidity.

Allergen: Pollens

Avoid fields with long grass.

Keep the animal inside whilst mowing the lawn.

Keep away from grass clippings.

Keep the animal inside at dawn and dusk, and when heavy pollen loads are forecasted.

Allergen: Storage mites

Store complete diets and dry foods in plastic containers with a lid. Do not store in open bags or boxes.

Wash the container between batches.

Do not feed the "crumbs" that accumulate at the bottom of these containers.

Wipe your pet's mouth and lips with a damp sponge or cloth after feeding to remove any food particles remaining on the skin.

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It is the policy of Axiom Veterinary Laboratories Ltd to provide a range of diagnostic services which are reliable and consistent with the expectation and requirements of its clients.

The company's objective of consistent high quality performance is met by mandatory adherence to protocol, through staff training and the development of personal responsibility for all personnel, together with the provision of adequate resources, according to the principles of Quality Assurance.

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