

HOW OFTEN WILL MY DOG REQUIRE IMMUNOTHERAPY INJECTIONS?

Generally, allergies are a lifelong problem that can be controlled but not cured. Once your dog's skin disease is controlled, or during the colder months of the year, you may find that you can increase the time period between maintenance injections up to one month. In general, dogs that do well on immunotherapy will slowly relapse if the injections are stopped.

WHAT IF MY DOG IS NOT DOING WELL ON IMMUNOTHERAPY?

As with humans on immunotherapy, a small percentage of dogs will not respond to the injections. It is critical that you work closely with your veterinarian. The problem may be as simple as flea infestation (there is currently no effective vaccine for flea immunotherapy), or bacterial infection, seborrhea or other treatable, complicating factors. In other cases, it may be necessary to change the contents, dosage or concentration of the immunotherapy. In selected cases, it may be beneficial to retest your dog because allergens to which your dog is reactive may change or increase over time.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER MEASURES I CAN TAKE TO HELP MY ALLERGIC DOG?

At the time your dog begins immunotherapy, you will receive a list of the allergens to which your pet reacted. The following table outlines environmental measures that you may take to help minimize your dog's exposure to certain allergens. Remember, 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 dog by making some simple lifestyle changes.

WHEN SHOULD I REORDER A REFILL?

Your dog's immunotherapy is individualized, so please call your veterinarian one month before you need a refill.

PRACTICAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE ATOPIC DOG

ALLERGEN

House Dust Mite

AVOIDANCE SUGGESTIONS

Put a plastic zippered cover over dog bed, wash bedding in hot water (over 70°C), avoid letting pet sleep on overstuffed furniture (If pet sleeps on human's bed, use plastic mattress/pillow covers), avoid stuffed toys, keep pet overnight or during working hours in uncarpeted rooms, frequent damp mopping of pet "holding" room.

ALLERGEN

Molds

AVOIDANCE SUGGESTIONS

Keep out of damp basements, avoid barns, avoid being around while lawn is mowed, avoid dusty dog foods, clean and disinfect humidifiers, avoid having large numbers of houseplants, avoid holding rooms for dogs that have high moisture levels (bathroom, laundry room), avoid crawl spaces under house, use dehumidifiers, clean with chlorine bleach solutions.

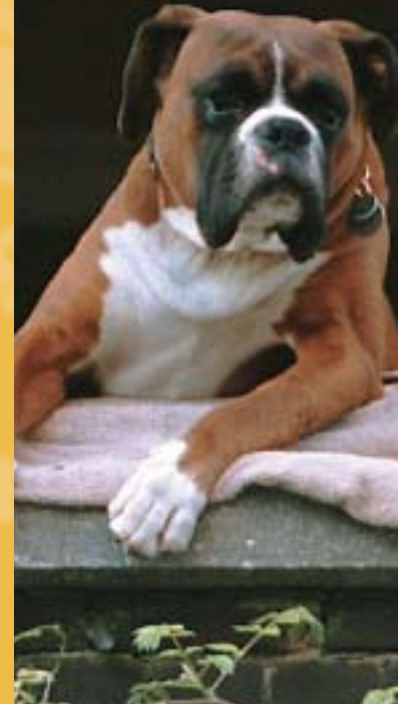
ALLERGEN

Pollens

AVOIDANCE SUGGESTIONS

Avoid fields, keep grass cut short, rinse dog off after exposure to high grasses/weeds, keep pet indoors at dusk and early morning during heavy pollen season, use air conditioners, keep dog away while mowing lawn.

IMMUNOTHERAPY FOR CONTROL OF ALLERGIES IN YOUR DOG



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QUESTIONS
AND ANSWERS
ABOUT
IMMUNOTHERAPY



HESKA



IMMUNOTHERAPY FOR CONTROL OF ALLERGIES IN YOUR DOG

You and your veterinarian have elected to find the cause of your dog's skin problems through allergy testing and to treat these problems using immunotherapy injections. For immunotherapy to be successful, it is important that you understand what the process involves and what your role is in helping to successfully manage your dog's allergic disease. Skin disease related to allergies can be a frustrating and long-term problem for you and your pet. Be assured that your veterinarian is recommending the best long-term, medically-appropriate treatment for this very important member of your family.

WHAT IS IMMUNOTHERAPY?

Immunotherapy is a medical treatment where allergens (pollens, dust, molds, mites, insects and fibers) to which your dog is allergic are injected into your pet in increasing amounts and concentrations. After immunotherapy, 70% 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 treatment has been formulated that contains the specific allergens identified as causing the skin problems in your dog. This is the safest way to control the clinical signs of allergy.

HOW ARE THE IMMUNOTHERAPY INJECTIONS GIVEN?

You and your veterinarian will decide whether it is appropriate for you to administer the immunotherapy at home or whether you would prefer to take your dog to the clinic for the 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 veterinarian 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 shot. Also, it is best that your dog not be heavily exercised or fed for one hour before or after the injection. If possible, give the injection when your veterinarian has office hours (for the rare instance of an adverse reaction) or be aware of the location of the nearest emergency clinic.

IS IMMUNOTHERAPY SAFE FOR MY DOG?

Yes, immunotherapy is the safest way to control allergic signs in your dog. As with any injectable medication, there is a less than 0.5% chance of an allergic reaction to the injection. If you notice any unusual signs following an immunotherapy injection, such as labored (heavy) breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, collapse or hives over the body, take the dog to your veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately.

ARE THERE OTHER REACTIONS TO WATCH FOR IN MY DOG?

Some increase in itchiness is normal during the low dose or "build-up" phase of immunotherapy. Some dogs will also show increased itchiness immediately after starting injections from a new treatment vial. Contact your veterinarian to discuss any reaction(s) that you notice while your dog is on immunotherapy.

HOW SOON CAN I EXPECT TO SEE SOME IMPROVEMENT FROM MY DOG'S IMMUNOTHERAPY?

Every dog is an individual and, just like people, will respond differently to a given medication. In general, it takes three to four months after therapy begins to start seeing improvement, although some owners feel they see improvement following the initial injection! It takes time, however, for your dog to build up the necessary antibodies. In most cases, the allergy has been present for months or even years prior to starting immunotherapy. Be patient! Continue with immunotherapy for a minimum of six to nine months to give your dog time to improve. Some dogs may not show improvement for a year.

CAN MY DOG RECEIVE OTHER MEDICATIONS WHILE ON IMMUNOTHERAPY?

Your veterinarian may elect to use medications such as antihistamines or corticosteroids and bathing to help keep your dog comfortable during the early stages of immunotherapy or during allergy season. Do not consider immunotherapy a failure because of the need to use occasional medications. Like many chronic diseases, allergies can be controlled but not cured.