

# Take a shot at allergies



Chronic congestion? Watery, itchy eyes? Sneezing and coughing? These may be symptoms of an allergy.

If your doctor diagnoses you with an allergy, they may recommend allergy shots. For the right person, an allergy shot regimen may bring much-needed relief from frustrating and ongoing symptoms.



## THE CAUSE OF ALLERGIES

An allergy occurs when the immune system attacks an allergen. This creates mucous and the classic allergy symptoms. Allergens are substances that are usually not harmful, but the immune system over-reacts to them, causing an allergy. Common allergens include:

- Mold
- Pollen
- Dander
- Dust mites
- Grass
- Ragweed
- Animal dander

## HOW ALLERGY SHOTS WORK

Each allergy shot contains a small amount of an allergen. When the immune system senses the allergen, it responds by producing an antibody. Antibodies neutralize and block the allergen from causing symptoms.

In general, the goal of an allergy shot regimen is to reduce the body's reactivity to the allergen. By introducing a small dose at a time, the immune system learns to identify and quickly neutralize the allergen. Over time, your immune system becomes more efficient and reduces allergy symptoms.

## BENEFITS OF ALLERGY SHOTS

Many different medications are available to treat allergies. However, for some people, those do not bring relief. Their doctor may recommend allergy shots as a safe and effective treatment to help them feel better. Shots may:

- Reduce allergy symptoms
- Reduce asthma symptoms for some people
- Reduce the risk of future allergies
- Reduce the need for other allergy medications

## DRAWBACKS

Allergy shots are not for everyone. Your doctor is your best resource to determine the right treatment for your allergies. Drawbacks of allergy shots include:

- Possible redness or swelling at the injection site
- Potential for a severe reaction
- Requires frequent visits to your doctor
- Not appropriate for people with certain medical conditions
- Not used for food allergies