



## Clinical note

### Immunotherapy for control of allergies

You and your veterinarian have elected to find the cause of your pet's skin problems through allergy testing and to treat these problems using immunotherapy.

For immunotherapy to be successful, it is important to understand what the process involves and what role is in helping to successfully manage your pet allergic disease.

Skin disease related to allergies can be a frustrating and long-term problem for you and your pet.

Immunotherapy is the best long-term, medically appropriate treatment for your pet.

#### What is immunotherapy ?

Immunotherapy is a medical treatment where allergens to which the pet is allergic are administered to the pet in increasing amounts and concentrations. After immunotherapy, 70% of pets 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 contain the specific allergens identified as causing the skin problems in the pet. This is the safest way to control the clinical signs of allergy.

#### How immunotherapy is given ?

The pet owner and the veterinarian together will decide whether it is appropriate to use a sublingual or an injectable form.

- Sublingual treatments are given by the pet owner
- Injectable treatments are given by the veterinarian

#### When is the best time to give immunotherapy ?

When it is possible to leave the pet at rest after providing the treatment. It is recommended that the pet is not heavily exercised or fed for 1h before or after the administration.

In the case of injectable, be always prepared to manage a potential adverse reaction or be aware of the nearest emergency clinic.

#### Are immunotherapy treatments safe ?

Yes, immunotherapy is the safest ways to control allergic signs in pets.

- Sublingual is very safe; no anaphylaxis reactions have been observed



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- **Injectable** : there is less than 0.5% chance of an allergic reaction to the injection. If unusual signs following an immunotherapy injection are observed, such heavy breathing, vomiting, diarrhoea, collapse, or hives over the body the pet must be cared in emergency immediately.

### **What other reactions may occur ?**

Some pets show an increase of the itchiness during the low dose or build-up of the treatment which is considered normal. Some dogs will also show increased itchiness immediately after starting injections from a new treatment vial. This is addressed by reducing the dose to half during the first two injections when a new vial is used. This phenomenon is not observed in sublingual treatments.

### **How soon improvement can be expected ?**

Every pet is an individual and , just like people, will respond differently to a given medication. In general, it takes 3-4 months after therapy begins to start seeing improvement, although some pet owners believe improvement is observed right from the beginning of the treatment. It takes time, however, for the pet to build the necessary antibodies. It is noteworthy that in most cases, the allergy has been present of months or even years prior to starting immunotherapy.

Immunotherapy must be continued for 6 to 12 months before deciding to interrupt the treatment since some dogs may not show improvement for a year.

It is important to realize that there is a subjective component in the assessment of the efficacy of an immunotherapy treatment.

### **Can other medications be given concomitantly with immunotherapy ?**

The veterinarian may elect to use other medications such as antihistamines, corticosteroids, apoquel, atopica or cytopoint to help keeping the pet comfortable during the early stages of immunotherapy. The objective is to decrease or ultimately stop all symptomatic treatments.

Allergy is a chronic disease; allergy can be controlled but not cured.

### **How long a pet will require immunotherapy treatment ?**

Generally, allergies are a lifelong problem that can be controlled but not cured. Once the pet skin disease is controlled, the treatment must be maintained for life. In general pets that do well on immunotherapy, will slowly relapse if the treatment is stopped.



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### What if the pet is not doing well on immunotherapy ?

As with humans on immunotherapy, a small percentage of pets will not respond to immunotherapy treatments. It is critical that the pet owner and the veterinarian work closely together. Often the problem may be bacterial infections, seborrhoea, or other complicating factors. In other cases, it may be necessary to adapt the dosage or frequency of administration of the treatment.

### Additional treatment benefits

#### Sublingual

- Sublingual treatments are believed to work a little bit faster than injectable, improvement is expected after 3-4 months of starting of the treatment
- Sublingual treatments may be an alternative when injectable cannot be given by a veterinary surgeon and the pet owner is unable to administer the injections
- Sublingual treatments might be an alternative to injections in cases where efficacy is not completely reached

#### Injectable

- The regular administration of the treatment by the veterinarian allows a continuous follow-up of the efficacy of the treatment

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