
Comparing Allergy Shots and Sublingual Immunotherapy: Pros and Cons



Allergy shots or drops? Subcutaneous immunotherapy or sublingual immunotherapy? Is one better? These are common questions people have when considering immunotherapy to help with their allergies. The answer? One isn't necessarily better than the other, but one might be better suited to your needs.

The best fit for your needs depends on factors specific to you, such as your medical history, schedule, and preferences.

What is Allergy Immunotherapy?

[Allergy immunotherapy](#) (AIT) is a treatment that "trains" your body to become less sensitive to a foreign substance called an allergen. However, to understand how it works, we need a basic understanding of an allergy.

Simply put, an [allergy](#) is your immune system's reaction to a substance it deems harmful. These substances are called allergens and may include bee venom, pollen, and pet dander. When your body is exposed to the allergen, your immune system produces antibodies that communicate with cells that release specific chemicals, triggering the allergic reaction.

To minimise this allergic reaction, allergy immunotherapy administers a small, incrementally increasing dose of the allergen to your body. This exposure helps reduce the production of the "blocking" antibody that triggers the reaction and, with time, can minimise your body's sensitivity to the allergen.

This process takes a while, often requiring three to five years to achieve the best results. While most folks notice improvements within the first year, it usually takes two to three years for the best results to appear.

What Are Allergy Shots?

[Allergy shots](#), also called subcutaneous immunotherapy, are one of two types of allergy immunotherapy. These shots are administered under the skin and contain a small dose of the allergen, allowing your body to build an allergen-specific tolerance over time.

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You need to visit your doctor or allergist for each allergy shot. The shot must be administered under medical supervision, as there's a higher risk of an adverse reaction. Additionally, you have to stay at the office for a set period after the shot for monitoring to ensure you don't experience a reaction.

This type of allergy immunotherapy is the most common of the duo, although it's less popular among children and allergy-shy adults.

What is Sublingual Immunotherapy?

Sublingual immunotherapy is the second type of allergy immunotherapy. It's administered under the tongue in the form of tablets or drops. Those tablets or drops contain the allergen, which slowly increases over time to desensitise your body to it.

With this type of immunotherapy, you can administer treatments from the comfort of your home. You won't need to visit the doctor's office for treatments, as there is little risk of an adverse reaction. Instead, you can quickly and easily administer the drops under your tongue, using the dosage instructed by your doctor or allergist.

This option is a go-to pick for kids and those who are squeamish around needles.

Allergy Shots vs. Sublingual Immunotherapy: Pros and Cons

Allergy shots and sublingual immunotherapy are decidedly different. Each has something different to offer, using a different method of delivering the allergen to your system. Here's a quick breakdown of the notable perks and drawbacks of each option:

	Pros	Cons
Allergy Shots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well-researched with extensive studies supporting efficacy• Proven to be highly effective• Wider range of treatable allergens• The doctor handles all injections, ensuring you don't have to worry about doing it yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent doctor visits can be time-consuming• Discomfort associated with injections• Higher risk of adverse reactions
Sublingual Immunotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convenience of at-home treatments• Painless due to oral administration• Lower risk of severe allergic reaction• Easy to use• Great for needle-shy people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited FDA-approved allergen range• Requires consistency, which can be difficult for some

So, Is One Better?

Neither allergy shots nor sublingual immunotherapy are inherently better than the other. Both have perks and drawbacks, offering remarkable results with a long-term commitment. However, with that said, one might be better suited to your needs than the other.

For example, suppose you don't want to worry about administering the dose yourself. In this case, allergy shots might be the best fit, as your doctor will do it for you. Or perhaps you want a needle-less option for your kiddo. In this situation, sublingual immunotherapy might be the best fit. It all depends on your needs and preferences.

Talk to your doctor if you're considering allergy immunotherapy or can't decide between allergy shots and sublingual immunotherapy. They can help you select the best fit based on your needs and medical history.

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