

Sublingual Allergy Treatment (SLIT)

By David Charnock, MD, FACS

There is an alternative option in the treatment of allergies called Sublingual Allergy Immunotherapy (SLIT) also known as allergy drops. Standard allergy treatments such as antihistamines are aimed to reduce the symptoms of allergic disease; however, they do not treat the underlying cause of the allergies. While very effective, these shots can be painful and require weekly visits with your physician's office to receive the injection. Allergy drops use similar substance, typically given in shot form, to be dosed as a drop under the tongue. It has proven effectiveness with a much easier delivery system that allows patients to self administer the drops without regular office visits. Use of these drops may improve long term allergy control, reduce the need for allergy medication, and reduce the number of visits to the doctor's office.

The allergy drops utilize an antigen substance which is FDA approved for allergy shots but it is given in an "off-label" manner under the tongue. There has been much research conducted that supports the use of this treatment, finding it to be similar in efficacy as allergy shots and perhaps even safer. Currently this therapy is endorsed by the World Allergy Organization, and used by well known institutions such as John Hopkins School of Medicine, University of North Carolina School of Medicine at Chapel Hill, and the US Military. Our office follows a protocol based on the guidelines and consensus statement from the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy, and we have partnered with All-American Allergy Alternatives, LLC as our dispensing pharmacy.

What is sublingual immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is the process of gradually introducing the body to small amounts of the allergens that causes the body to react. Put simply, small doses of whatever you are allergic to is carefully put into your body until you build up immunity to it. The "sublingual" portion refers to how the dose is given; instead of a shot, a few allergy drops are placed under the tongue once daily. Sublingual immunotherapy is also called SLIT.

What is an allergen?

An allergen is the substance that causes your allergies. Examples of allergens are: weeds, trees, pollen, grasses, molds, dust mites, and animal hair. Allergens are also referred to as antigens.

What are allergenic extracts?

Allergenic extracts are also called "biological drug substances". They are the sterile products extracted or filtered by government licensed manufacturers from the source material containing the allergen.

What are allergy drops?

Allergy drops are the finished dosage form in the final container that is made from the allergy extracts. Allergy drops are also called a "biological drug product", as referred to by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

What is the purpose of sublingual immunotherapy (under-the-tongue allergy drops)?

The purpose of sublingual immunotherapy (under-the-tongue allergy drops) is to decrease your sensitivity to allergy causing substances, so that exposure to the offending allergen (pollen, mold, dust mites, etc.) will result in fewer and less severe symptoms. This does not mean that sublingual immunotherapy is a substitute for avoiding whatever you are allergic to or for the use of allergy medications or surgery, if indicated.

We feel sublingual immunotherapy allergy drops will likely prove to be one of the most important innovations in allergy treatment in recent times.

For additional information on allergy drops, please visit our website at www.RRMC.org.

If you have questions, please contact your healthcare provider or Rutland ENT & Audiology at Rutland Office, 802.775.3314 or Dorset Office, 802.366.8195.