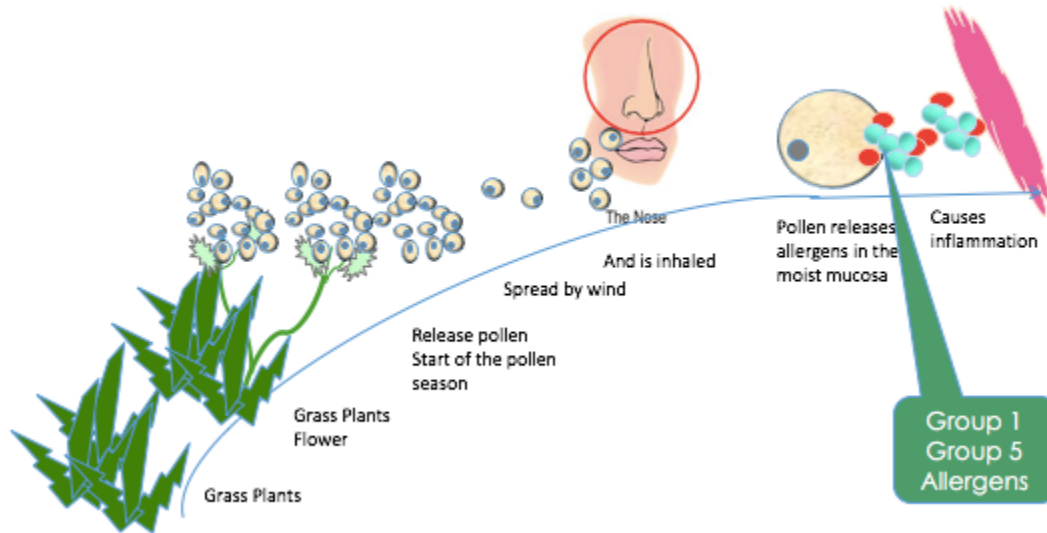




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## Triggering Grass Allergy Symptoms



Allergy is a condition, often inherited, in which the immune system of the affected person reacts to something that is either eaten, touched, or inhaled that doesn't affect most other people. The patient's immune system reacts to this substance as if it were an "enemy invader" (like a virus). This reaction leads to symptoms that often adversely affect the patient's work, play, rest, and overall quality of life.

### ***Allergens Cause Allergies***

Any substance that triggers an allergic reaction is called an allergen. Allergens "invade" the body by being inhaled, swallowed or injected, or they may be absorbed through the skin. Common allergens include pollen, dust and mold.

### ***How Common Are Allergies?***

Allergies are among the nation's most common and costly health problems. They affect as many as one in four people. More than 50 million Americans have allergic rhinitis. The yearly sales of antihistamines, decongestants, nasal cromolyn and nasal corticosteroids now exceeds \$5 billion.

### ***What Are The Symptoms Of Ear, Nose And Throat Allergies?***

People often think of allergy as only "hay fever," with sneezing, runny nose, nasal stuffiness and itchy, watery eyes. However, allergies can also cause symptoms such as chronic "sinus" problems, excess nasal and throat drainage (postnasal drip), head congestion, frequent "colds," hoarse voice, eczema (skin allergies), recurring ear infections, hearing loss, dizziness, chronic cough and asthma. Even stomach and intestinal problems as well as excessive fatigue can be symptoms of allergy.

Symptoms of ear, nose, and throat allergies may include:

- Repeated sneezing
- Nasal itching and rubbing
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Dark circles under the eyes
- Crease across bridge of nose
- Frequent throat clearing
- Mouth breathing
- Diminished/lost sense of smell/taste
- Recurrent, unexplained nosebleeds
- Recurrent ear infections

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- Recurrent sinus infections
- Fluctuating hearing loss
- Cold-like symptoms more than 10 days
- Symptoms recur same time each year
- Chronic fatigue

Symptoms can range from minor to severe. The greater the frequency and/or amount of exposure, the greater the chance that the susceptible person will develop an allergic problem that will require treatment. **What causes Symptoms to Begin?** There is no “usual” way for an allergy to begin; the onset may be sudden or gradual. Often, symptoms develop following an unusual stress to the immune system, such as a severe viral infection. **Can an Allergy be Outgrown?** No, but it is common for people to change the way their allergic symptoms affect them. For example, a baby may develop colic, recurrent ear infections, or have eczema, but as it grows older, it may develop different allergic symptoms such as hay fever, fluid behind the eardrum, or asthma. **How do we make the Diagnosis?** The initial or presumptive diagnosis of allergy is made by history and physical examination. If one wishes to be certain of the diagnosis and proceed to treat the patient effectively, the findings must be confirmed by tests that identify the specific offending allergens. **Who can treat my ear, Nose, and Throat Allergies?** Because allergies can produce such a wide range of symptoms, there are a number of doctors, both specialists and primary care physicians, who may be qualified to treat the allergic patient.

#### **There Are Three Common Ways To Manage Or Treat Allergies**

1. The first step many allergy sufferers try is to manage their environment by removing the triggers. In many cases the trigger is the beloved family pet. Contrary to what you may think, you cannot limit a cat to certain portions of the house and hope to prevent the allergy symptom triggers. Other recommendations to control indoor allergies include vacuuming regularly, eliminating carpet where you can, and washing bedding regularly in hot water. While these tips can help reduce allergen exposure, they are sometimes inadequate. There are some commercially available products designed to reduce or remove allergens from the home, such as dust mites and dander, however, most products are not guaranteed to be effective.
2. Medical management is the second step in effective allergy management. Many allergy medications are now available over-the-counter (OTC) at your local drug store, grocery store, or superstore. Options range from antihistamines, such as Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritin, and Benedryl. There are also prescription antihistamines as well. Intranasal corticosteroids work by reducing the inflammation in the nose and airway passages. OTC intranasal corticosteroids options include Flonase, Flonase sensimist, and Nasocort. Antihistamines are one class of medications commonly used for allergy treatment, that work by blocking the histamine receptors, which are triggered by the allergen and cause the symptoms of runny nose, itchy eyes and congestion. OTC Intranasal corticosteroids work by reducing the inflammation in the nose and airway passages. There are over-the-counter eye drops made specifically to help reduce allergy symptoms in the eye. This fall under the brand of Alaway and Zadiator and Patanol.
3. Allergy immunotherapy is a treatment option offered in the physicians office. After you are tested to determine what specifically you are allergic to, the physician will put you on an immunotherapy regimen that includes weekly shots to build up your immunity against the offending allergen. Allergy immunotherapy usually lasts up to three years to impact the immune system enough to reduce the reaction to allergens.

#### **ALLERGY SHOTS (IMMUNOTHERAPY)**

Allergen immunotherapy, also known as allergy shots, is a form of long-term treatment that decreases symptoms for many people with allergic rhinitis, allergic asthma, conjunctivitis (eye allergy) or stinging insect allergy.

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Allergy shots decrease sensitivity to allergens and often leads to lasting relief of allergy symptoms even after treatment is stopped. This makes it a cost-effective, beneficial treatment approach for many people.

### **Who Can Benefit From Allergy Shots?**

Both children and adults can receive allergy shots, although it is not typically recommended for children under age five. This is because of the difficulties younger children may have in cooperating with the program and in articulating any adverse symptoms they may be experiencing. When considering allergy shots for an older adult, medical conditions such as cardiac disease should be taken into consideration and discussed with your allergist / immunologist first.

You and your allergist / immunologist should base your decision regarding allergy shots on:

- Length of allergy season and severity of your symptoms
- How well medications and/or environmental controls are helping your allergy symptoms
- Your desire to avoid long-term medication use
- Time available for treatment (allergy shots requires a significant commitment)
- Cost, which may vary depending on region and insurance coverage

Allergy shots are not used to treat food allergies. The best option for people with food allergies is to strictly avoid that food.

### **How Do Allergy Shots Work?**

Allergy shots work like a vaccine. Your body responds to injected amounts of a particular allergen, given in gradually increasing doses, by developing immunity or tolerance to the allergen.

There are two phases:

- **Build-up phase.** This involves receiving injections with increasing amounts of the allergens about one to two times per week. The length of this phase depends upon how often the injections are received, but generally ranges from three to six months.
- **Maintenance phase.** This begins once the effective dose is reached. The effective maintenance dose depends on your level of allergen sensitivity and your response to the build-up phase.

You may notice a decrease in symptoms during the build-up phase, but it may take as long as 12 months on the maintenance dose to notice an improvement. If allergy shots are successful, maintenance treatment is generally continued for three to five years. Any decision to stop allergy shots should be discussed with your allergist / immunologist.

### **How Effective Are Allergy Shots?**

Allergy shots have shown to decrease symptoms of many allergies. It can prevent the development of new allergies, and in children it can prevent the progression of allergic disease from allergic rhinitis to asthma. The effectiveness of allergy shots appears to be related to the length of the treatment program as well as the dose of the allergen. Some people experience lasting relief from allergy symptoms, while others may relapse after discontinuing allergy shots. If you have not seen improvement after a year of maintenance therapy, your allergist / immunologist will work with you to discuss treatment options.

Failure to respond to allergy shots may be due to several factors:

- Inadequate dose of allergen in the allergy vaccine
- Missing allergens not identified during the allergy evaluation
- High levels of allergen in the environment
- Significant exposure to non-allergic triggers, such as tobacco smoke

### **Where Should Allergy Shots Be Given?**

This type of treatment should be supervised by a specialized physician in a facility equipped with proper staff and equipment to identify and treat adverse reactions to allergy injections. Ideally, immunotherapy should be given in your allergist /



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immunologist's office. If this is not possible, your allergist / immunologist should provide the supervising physician with comprehensive instructions about your allergy shot treatments.

**Are There Risks?**

A typical reaction is redness and swelling at the injection site. This can happen immediately or several hours after the treatment. In some instances, symptoms can include increased allergy symptoms such as sneezing, nasal congestion or hives. Serious reactions to allergy shots are rare. When they do occur, they require immediate medical attention. Symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction can include swelling in the throat, wheezing or tightness in the chest, nausea and dizziness. Most serious reactions develop within 30 minutes of the allergy injections. This is why it is recommended you wait in your doctor's office for at least 30 minutes after you receive allergy shots

The above information has been modified from the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy Patient Resources found at: <https://aaoallergy.org/patient-resources/>