

Staloral Immunotherapy – Patient Information

Staloral oral immunotherapy is an effective treatment for allergies. It is different to previous oral immunotherapies, which are diluted injectable solution, taken orally. In the 7 studies as of March 2007, it is equally an effective treatment as injection immunotherapy and a lot safer. Over 140 million doses of Staloral immunotherapy have been given without one serious reaction. Severe reactions have occurred with alpyral injection solution in about 1 in 7000 injections and death has occurred in about 1 in 2 million injections.

Staloral immunotherapy can be self-administered at home and saves the time and cost of going to the doctor (for injection immunotherapy). It costs more than injection solutions because it is several hundred times the strength. Most health-care extra funds will rebate some of the cost of oral immunotherapy.

The idea of immunotherapy is to make your body tolerate what you are allergic to. We do this by increasing the dose of the ingested allergen between 240-800 times during the course of the program. It is still important to do allergen reduction measures, as you do not want to remind your body of your allergens by continuing to breathe in high amounts. Most patients find it reduces the need to take other medications.

The dose is given by pressing the solution under the tongue. The chart will show you how to increase the strength. Use **PRESSES** not drops. The solution should be kept under the tongue for 2 minutes and the patient should not drink or eat for 15 minutes afterwards. The drops should then be swallowed.

Side effects are rare and are related to dose. Some people can have swelling under the tongue or abdominal pain (<10% of patients). While building up the dosage, if you have these symptoms or if you feel your asthma or hay fever increasing, go back to the dose that you last tolerated and have that for a couple of days. Then increase slowly, having each step for 2-3 days rather than increasing every day. You can also take an antihistamine to reduce this.

Most patients feel a difference in the first 3-4 months of therapy and will continue to improve into the second and third year of treatment. I like to review patients after 4 months. This ensures that the patient is starting to get better and it also allows about 6 weeks for the delivery of new solutions in from Europe. These solutions have to come into Australia on a named-patient basis, so they do take several weeks. A bottle of the strongest strength should last 6-7 weeks.

With Immunotherapy for rhinitis, about 70% of patients are improved for about 5 years. About 10-15% of patients wish to return to therapy within 18 months of finishing treatment and 10-15% have a good 5-7 years symptom-reduced, after completing treatment. There is already data for patients who oral immunotherapy for dust mite, have less symptoms than controls, 10 years after therapy. In early childhood, immunotherapy has been shown to reduce the progression to asthma and limit the development of new allergies.

If you have symptoms from dosing when you are unwell, halve the dose and increase back up when feeling better.

The solutions are made of protein and are best stored at 2-8 degrees, i.e. in the fridge. They are stable at room temperature (<25°C) for a couple of weeks if you are travelling. It is okay to miss the dose for up to 2 weeks, if it is forgotten for some reason.