

**Patient
Information**

Starting desensitisation for grass and tree pollen

Introduction

This leaflet provides information on your treatment for grass and tree pollen hay fever.

What is desensitisation?

Grass and tree desensitising vaccine is used to treat hay fever in patients who are not helped by anti-allergy medication. In hay fever, contact with high levels of pollen causes sneezing and running nose and eyes.

The vaccines are modified and released slowly to allow the body to become gradually used to them. A course of treatment is given before the start of the season.

The treatment consists of 1 injection a week for 3 weeks followed by 3 fortnightly injections. This is repeated annually for 3 years. This treatment is given in the Edward Jenner Day Unit at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

You will also be seen in the Allergy Clinic on an annual basis.

Before having the vaccine

You should consider the following:

- Are you pregnant or think you may be pregnant?
- Do you have asthma or other respiratory problems?
- Do you have any severe chronic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or heart disease?
- Are you taking antihistamines, steroids or betablockers?
- Have you had tuberculosis?
- Do you have any disorder of the immune system?
- Have you had an infection or a high temperature in the last 24 hours?
- Have you had any vaccinations within the last 7 days?

If you think the answer is yes to any of the above, please tell your doctor or nurse before you are given the vaccine.

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Department

Immunology

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Are there any side effects?

Severe adverse reactions are uncommon, but usually happen within an hour after your injection. A nurse will be present during your treatment and you will be carefully observed for at least 1 hour.

Mild or moderate reactions can be easily treated. However, if you have repeated allergic reactions, or a severe reaction, it may be necessary to stop your treatment.

Mild reaction

- The injection site may itch slightly
- Local wheal and flare reaction (raised lump with a red area around it)
- Local swelling
- Tiredness after the injection of vaccine

Moderate reaction

- Intense itching
- Erythema (redness of the skin)
- Rhinitis (runny nose)
- Angioedema (swelling of the face and lips)

Severe reaction

- Difficulty in breathing (wheezing)
- Anaphylactic shock, this causes a severe drop in blood pressure and collapse. Emergency treatment will be needed.

Starting your injections

- You will be given a date and time to attend the Edward Jenner Unit at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.
- It is advisable not to eat a heavy meal immediately before an injection is due to be given.
- Occasionally, the injection may cause mild drowsiness. Do not drive or operate machinery if this is the case.
- Your injection is given by subcutaneous route (below the layers of skin) usually into the upper arm.

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What happens after my injection?

- You must stay in the unit for at least 1 hour after your injection as allergic reactions could occur within this time.
- In the unlikely event of a delayed reaction, please contact your GP.
- While in the unit report to the nurses any wheeze, cough, shortness of breath, rash or giddiness.
- You may have some redness and swelling at the site of the injection.
- Strenuous physical exercise is not advisable for up to 12 hours following the injection. It is also advised not to attend a gym during this time.

Contact information

The Edward Jenner Unit

Gloucester Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 5213

Monday to Thursday, 8:00am to 5:00pm

Further information

British Allergy Foundation

Tel: 01322 619 898

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 9:00pm

Saturday to Sunday, 10:00 am to 1:00pm

Website: www.allergyfoundation.com

E-mail: info@allergyuk.org

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