

Next Century Medical Care

Venom Immunotherapy Injection Information

What are venom allergy shots?

Venom immunotherapy injections or "venom allergy shots" are prescribed for patients with venom or hymenoptera (i.e. honeybee, wasp, white faced hornet, yellow hornet, and yellow jacket). Venom allergy shots are the only medical treatment that could potentially modify allergic disease (i.e. improve the underlying disease and not just mask symptoms). Research studies have demonstrated that venom allergy shots are very effective in modifying the allergic immune response. Venom allergy shots are recommended for individuals at least 5 years of age who have a history of a life-threatening allergic reaction.

How effective are venom allergy shots?

Venom allergy shots may "down-regulate" allergic reactions to the specific venom. In most cases, after 5 years of venom allergy shots, patients are considered cured of their venom allergy. Severe allergic reactions, such as anaphylaxis, may require the discontinuation of venom allergy shots. It is important to maintain venom allergy shots at the proper time interval, usually once per month. Missing your venom allergy shots during build-up phase or maintenance phase will require a dose adjustment. Office staff have written instructions if you miss receiving your venom allergy shots for longer than what is recommended.

How are my venom allergy shots made? Where can I get my venom allergy shots?

Once your questions have been answered and you have signed your venom allergy shot consent, you have two options for starting your venom allergy shots. You can either opt for a RUSH buildup whereby you build up to maintenance for each venom in about 4-6 hours. Or you can opt for the TRADITIONAL buildup whereby you slowly buildup to maintenance over weeks for each venom. Venom allergy shots must be administered in the Next Century Medical Care office. These are not "mixed" like regular allergy shots. You receive your venom allergy shots for stock vials. Our medical office has access to emergency equipment and medications to manage an allergic reaction. Minors presenting for a venom allergy shot or office visit without a legal guardian present will not receive a venom allergy shot or be seen for the office visit.

What is anaphylaxis? Am I at risk for this on venom allergy shots?

When you receive your venom allergy shots, you are being injected with the venom you are allergic to. An allergic reaction of some degree will likely occur. Most patients on venom allergy shots will experience what is called a large local (i.e. swelling, redness, warmth and/or pain at the injection site). If you have large locals with your venom allergy shots, your healthcare provider must be notified to provide guidance for appropriate management. This is especially important in

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the build-up phase, when we are increasing your allergens in your shots. A systemic reaction or anaphylaxis may occur at any time while on venom allergy shots. Anaphylaxis is a severe life-threatening reaction with multiple symptoms (e.g. watery eyes, sneezing, runny nose, hives, flushing, lightheadedness, coughing, wheezing and/or shortness of breath) affecting different parts of the body. Initial treatment will be initiated at the office, but some patients require advanced medical care requiring their transportation to the local emergency room. Waiting the required 20 to 30 minutes after a venom allergy shot helps with access to immediate emergency treatment if an allergic reaction occurs. It is better to have an allergic reaction in the waiting room than driving down the road.

Venom allergy shots should be withheld if you are sick. The risk of a systemic reaction and your ability to be successfully treated for a systemic reaction may be impacted if you are getting sick, currently sick, or just getting over a recent illness. If you are sick enough to miss school/work or need an antibiotic, then you are sick enough to not get your venom allergy shot. Serious systemic reactions can occur in patients with uncontrolled asthma. Your peak flow must be checked prior to and after the 20 to 30-minute waiting period with venom allergy shots if you have asthma. If your asthma is not controlled with your asthma action plan, you should not get a venom allergy shot until you have been evaluated by your healthcare provider. Individuals with other chronic diseases not well controlled, such as heart disease, diabetes, or COPD, may experience worse symptoms and require the transportation to the local emergency room.

What happens to my venom allergy shots if I get pregnant?

Venom allergy shots are generally safe during pregnancy; however, there is a risk of anaphylaxis at any time during venom allergy shot treatment. Build up is not advisable during pregnancy. Once pregnant, you can maintain your current dosing as long as you are on schedule. Venom allergy shots can be discontinued once pregnant and restarted after delivery; however, rebuilding will be necessary.

Please inform the office staff if you have been prescribed any new medications. There are some medications used to treat chronic medical conditions that would impair medications used to treat an allergic reaction, such as beta blockers.