

**Student Health Service**

4189 Westlawn
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1100
319-335-8392 Fax 319-335-8249
<http://studenthealth.uiowa.edu>
Travel & Allergy
319-335-8365

Information about Possible Reactions following Allergy Shots

Note: this information does not replace or supersede directions from your prescribing allergist.

Allergy Shots *usually* cause no immediate problems. The two possible side effects are **Local** and **Severe/Systemic Reactions**.

Local Reactions:

- Are fairly common, are experienced as redness, itching/discomfort, and/or swelling at your injection site(s), and usually are no larger than a quarter or half dollar (25-50 mm). This type of reaction can occur within minutes of your allergy shot(s) or several hours after administration. These reactions can last for minutes or several hours.
- **Treatment:** If a local reaction is not bothering you, you don't need to do anything. However, if you experience pain, itching, bothersome swelling or redness, or "warmth" at the site there are some over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications that can be utilized at home. Please follow all medication package directions for dosage and administration.

Cold Packs/Compresses—can be applied to the allergy shot site(s) to help decrease swelling and "warmth." Student Health also has cold packs or ice cubes if you would like something to place on your shot sites during your 30 minute wait—just ask!

Hydrocortisone or Benadryl cream/ointment—can be applied to the allergy shot site(s) to help decrease redness, itching, and/or swelling. Let us know if you would like to store a tube with your extract.

Oral Antihistamines—can be taken following your allergy shot(s) to help decrease itching, swelling, and redness. Do not double up on antihistamines if you have already taken a dose before your shots. You may have a prescription strength antihistamine from your allergist (such as Allegra or Clarinex) or you can take an over-the-counter antihistamine (such as Claritin, Benadryl, Zyrtec or Chlor-Trimeton). Please exercise caution when taking antihistamines, especially while driving or operating machinery, as some can cause drowsiness.

Tylenol/Acetaminophen—can be taken following your allergy shot(s) to help decrease pain and discomfort.

- Do not scratch or massage the injection site(s) as that may worsen a local reaction.
- You should not expect to have a major flare-up of your allergy symptoms following a shot.
- If your local reaction lasts more than 24 hours or significantly worsens (e.g. becomes larger, warmer, or more painful), please contact us at 319-335-8365 (Travel & Allergy) or 319-335-9704 (Nurseline) from 8-5, Monday through Friday, or contact your Allergist.
- If you believe you are developing symptoms of a Severe/Systemic Reaction, please follow the directions under **Severe/Systemic Reactions**.

Severe/Systemic Reactions:

- Much less common than local reactions, but require **immediate** treatment as they can be life-threatening.

- **PLEASE NOTIFY AN ALLERGY NURSE OR ANY STUDENT HEALTH STAFF MEMBER IF YOU DEVELOP ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:**
 - *Any allergy symptom that occurs at a location other than the injection site(s)*
 - *Sudden onset of frequent Sneezing*
 - *Sudden onset of moderate to severe Nasal Congestion*
 - *Chest Congestion, Difficulty Breathing, or Wheezing*
 - *Swelling of Tongue or Throat*
 - *Itching at locations other than the injection site(s)*
 - *Hives at locations other than the injection site(s)*
 - *Abdominal Cramping*
 - *Light-headedness or Dizziness*
- These symptoms usually begin within 30 minutes following administration of allergy shots, which is why we require you to remain at Student Health. However, please do not ignore these symptoms even if they begin several hours after your shot(s).
- **IF YOU DEVELOP THESE SYMPTOMS AFTER LEAVING STUDENT HEALTH, PLEASE TREAT THEM AS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. USE YOUR EPIPEN AND CALL 911/PROCEED TO A LOCAL EMERGENCY FACILITY.**

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

200 Hawkins Dr.

Iowa City, IA 52242

(Emergency Treatment Center entrance is located off Grand Ave.)

319-356-2233

Mercy Iowa City

500 East Market

Iowa City, IA 52245

(Emergency Room entrance is located off Bloomington St.)

319-358-2767

- Please notify Student Health 319-335-8365 (Travel & Allergy) or 319-335-9704 (Nurseline) from 8-5, Monday through Friday, **and** your Allergist if you are treated for a Severe/Systemic Reaction. Your Allergist may want you to have an evaluation before you receive any additional allergy shots, and we will require updated instructions from your Allergist before administering allergy shots.

Questions? Please contact Travel & Allergy at 319-335-8365

Information compiled from the following organizations:

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology <http://www.aaaai.org/patients/publicedmat/tips/whatareallergyshots.stm>

Joint Council of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology http://www.jcaai.org/pp/ai_2_algorithms.asp

American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology <http://www.acaai.org/NR/rdonlyres/0B7225C2-30D0-451A-8C92-694AA9CC300A/0/sectionk.pdf>