



ORAL IMMUNOTHERAPY

QUESTIONS (AND ANSWERS) CONCERNING ORAL IMMUNOTHERAPY (OIT)

You or a family member may be starting treatment for food allergy, also known as oral immunotherapy (OIT). This handout is designed to help answer the most common questions about OIT. Please feel free to speak with one of our staff members if you have additional questions, or if new questions or problems arise. By working together on your treatment plan, we will have the best opportunity for good control of your allergy symptoms.

What is food oral immunotherapy, or “OIT?”

Oral immunotherapy, or OIT, helps desensitize patients to the foods they are allergic to by giving them small quantities of the food allergen to ingest daily and gradually building their body’s resistance to the allergic food.

What is the goal of OIT?

The #1 goal of OIT is safety. This is reached by increasing the amount of food eaten that causes an allergic reaction to that food. This will allow the patient to eat food that contains the allergic food without worrying about reactions. This is not a cure for food allergies, and patients likely will have to maintain OIT dosing their entire lives.

How does OIT work?

OIT starts with eating very small doses of the allergic food under medical supervision in the office. The allergic food is eaten once a day every day, and the amount of food eaten is increased each week in the office ONLY. Patients usually reach the highest dose, or “maintenance” level, after three to six months of weekly visits. Patients need to continue eating the allergic food every day to maintain protection.

What foods are currently available through the OIT program?

Currently, we offer OIT for peanuts, all tree nuts, sesame seeds, wheat, cow’s milk, chicken eggs, and soy. Ask our team if you are interested in a food you do not see on the list.

If the patient is allergic to multiple foods, will completing OIT for one food help treat other food allergies?

Each OIT food and individual is specific. Completing one food through the program does not necessarily treat other food allergies. Talk to your provider or ask the OIT team for more specific information for treating multiple food allergies.

Can a patient do allergy shots or drops while doing OIT?

Yes, patients can take allergy shots or drops for environmental allergies and food OIT. However, a patient must have reached the top dose of their allergy shots before starting food OIT. Additionally, a patient who has started OIT must graduate from food before starting allergy shots or drops.

What should the patient do if there is an allergic reaction at home?

In the rare event of an allergic reaction at home, you will be given detailed instructions on managing allergic reactions before and after starting OIT. You treat an allergic reaction to food the same way you treat any other allergic reaction.

Can an OIT graduate ever be able to eat the allergic food freely?

Yes. Many of our OIT graduates have been able to eat much larger servings than their daily OIT dose of the food and even add the allergic food back into their diet. This typically occurs six months after graduating from an allergic food, and the OIT program can provide more information if this is a goal for the patient.