



## MEDICAL POLICY

Date Reviewed: 03/01/05, 09/22/06, 04/20/07, 02/15/08, 01/23/09, 02/05/10, 01/14/11

Subject: Allergy Treatment

Description: Allergy treatment includes a variety of methods, including avoidance, medication, and immunotherapy. Avoidance of the allergen responsible for the symptoms is the most effective treatment for an allergy. In cases where the allergen cannot be avoided completely (for example, dust or pollens), a variety of different medications, including antihistamines, can be used. When medications are ineffective in controlling an individual's allergic symptoms, immunotherapy may be necessary. Immunotherapy involves the administration (injection) of increasing amounts of the allergen at regular intervals to reduce or control the allergic symptoms and other inflammatory responses.

### Indications of Coverage:

Allergy immunotherapy is considered medically necessary for the treatment of non-food allergies when all of the following conditions are met:

There is a history of allergic rhinitis, allergy induced asthma, or allergy to insect stings

Testing (skin or blood) has documented a positive reaction to the allergen

Avoidance and medication are ineffective or are contraindicated (for example, the medication cannot be tolerated or the side effects of the medication (excessive drowsiness) are unacceptable)

Rapid desensitization is considered medically necessary when any of the following conditions are described:

Stinging insect (hymenoptera, wasp, hornet, bee) allergy

Drug allergy when alternative medications are unavailable or contraindicated

### Limitations of Coverage:

Review contract and endorsements for exclusions and prior authorization or benefit requirements.

If used for a condition/diagnosis other than is listed in the Indications of Coverage, deny as experimental or investigative.

If used for a condition/diagnosis that is listed in the Indications of Coverage, but the criteria are not met, deny as not medically necessary.

Allergy treatments are considered not medically necessary for the following conditions: headache, food allergies, non-allergic asthma, urticaria, angioedema, and candidiasis

The following allergy treatments are considered experimental or investigative as there is insufficient peer-reviewed evidence supporting their effectiveness:

Sublingual antigens (sublingual drops)

Autogenous urine therapy

Environmental control for multiple chemical sensitivity

Neutralization therapy (provocative neutralization therapy, desensitization neutralization)

Documentation Required:

Office notes

Allergy test results

**Rationale:** There are three basic types of allergy treatment – avoiding the allergen, medication therapy, and immunotherapy. Avoidance is the most effective treatment, but when avoidance is not possible, various medications (for example, antihistamines) are available for treatment. Immunotherapy is indicated when avoiding the allergen and medical therapy are ineffective. These injections will limit the severity of the symptoms that are the result of contact with the allergen. The use of immunotherapy for the management of headache, food allergies, non-allergic asthma, urticaria, angioedema, and candidiasis has not been established. Sublingual immunotherapy is the subject of continuing research and the literature is not clearly supportive of this technique.

**References:** Allergen immunotherapy: a practice parameter. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol* 2003 Jan;90(1 Suppl 1):1-40.

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*Approved by the Medical Director*