100 YEARS OF ALLERGY SHOTS

The year 2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the first report of using allergy shots to rid patients of troublesome environmental allergy symptoms. In 1911 English physicians Leonard Noone and Richard Freeman published a report in the medical journal Lancet discussing injecting patients who had grass pollen allergies with dilute solutions of grass extracts. After the shots, these patients noted a marked improvement. Although the process is slow, the duration of shots is four to five years, although some highly sensitive individuals may require longer. Patients need to be tested at the beginning to determine the most effective antigens, since concentration of the antigen is important. For example, some patients may tolerate grass pollen antigen at a concentration of 1:100,000, whereas others may need 1:1,000,000 or higher concentration.

Patients with previous IgE-mediated allergy, those that demonstrate a positive skin or blood test, are candidates for allergy shots. Patients who do not respond to or cannot tolerate oral medications often find relief from allergy shots, as do those with severe allergies. Recent studies have shown that young children with nasal allergies were less likely to develop hay fever and asthma if they received allergy shots.

At the beginning, allergy shots are administered once or twice weekly. Most patients notice an improvement in their skin, eye and respiratory symptoms within two or three weeks. Most patients do not experience many symptoms after they receive their shots. However, a few patients may have systemic reactions with flushing, hives, wheezing, and shortness of breath. For patients who do experience these reactions, premedication with antihistamines and epinephrine (adrenaline) and anti-histamines.

We accept most health insurance plans, including many PPOs, and are Medicare participants.