

Get on Top of Your Allergies Before They Get You!

Sublingual Immunotherapy

An exciting approach to environmental allergies!

Here in lovely Victoria, spring comes early and with it comes that pollen that can cause some people to feel miserable. Naturopathic medicine has always had some great tools to help treat and manage allergies but here's something you might not have heard of: Sublingual Immunotherapy or SLIT for short.

SLIT is a safe, proven, injection-free treatment that address the the underlying causes of seasonal and environmental allergies. SLIT works by delivering a low dose of the allergenic substance (eg. pollen) at frequent intervals under the tongue to build up the body's tolerance to an allergen over time. This approach is similar to traditional allergy injections but is, in fact, a safer option. The reason for this is because the treatment is administered 2 – 3 times a day, rather than weekly or twice weekly via in office injections, so the amount of allergenic substance in each does can be decreased (and therefore is very unlikely to cause a negative reaction). SLIT has been found to be effective in the treatment of hayfever, allergic rhinitis, allergic conjunctivitis and allergic asthma and can help to prevent the development of allergic asthma in children who suffer from eczema and allergic rhinitis.

Scratch Testing:

Accurate diagnosis is absolutely essential for effective allergy management. An in office allergy scratch test is required to ensure that SLIT is right for you. This test identifies the allergens that are causing you to react, allowing the appropriate type of immunotherapy to be determined. Allergy diagnosis by scratch testing focuses on the patient's allergen specific IgE. IgE is a class of antibody that is produced by the body against allergens and is responsible for precipitating allergic symptoms. An allergic person carries tens of thousands of IgE coated mast cells in their skin. As soon as the allergen is detected an immediate hypersensitivity reaction occurs causing the characteristic wheal (itchy red bump – that will diminish shortly after the test). Individuals highly allergic to an allergen will have more IgE present under the skin than those only mildly allergic. Consequently, the size of the reaction is linked to the degree of sensitivity of the patient. Once a patients allergies are clearly diagnosed the appropriate treatment regime can be administered.

Scratch testing is appropriate for inhaled allergies and allergies that show up immediately after contact with the allergenic substance. Many people also wonder about food allergies, while food allergies can be due to a similar response in the body, it is also possible to have food allergies that are not well tested with this method. We have other means of diagnosing this type of food allergy and in fact, it is often the case that identifying and avoiding this type of food allergy can also help improve environmental allergies, for more information on food allergies and testing please feel free to contact Dr. Blanks.

Safety notes:

- Scratch testing is not appropriate for those who are taking beta blockers or pregnant women.
- SLIT is safe for children 3 years of age and older.
- People with asthma should have their symptoms well under control before commencing testing and treatment and are requested to bring their blue inhalers (salbutamol) with them for testing and treatment.

Treatment with SLIT:

For those whose allergies follow a seasonal course (pollen allergies) the best time to start treatment is 4 to 6 weeks before your allergy season, however, it is also possible to treat during your allergy season. Cat and dust mite allergies are not related to any season and may be started at any time.

Formulas are available to treat a number of common allergens including: **cat, trees, grass, weed, ragweed, dust mite**. A mold formula should be available in the near future.

How to get started:

For testing: If you are not a patient of Dr. Blanks' you may book an appointment for the testing to ensure that SLIT is right for you. The test will take at least 30 minute and during this time you will have the opportunity to learn more about SLIT and other information regarding a naturopathic approach to allergies (and naturopathic medicine in general). **The fee for this test is \$40** and there will be a short intake form for you to fill out prior to testing. If together you decide that SLIT is right for you, you will then make an appointment with Dr. Blanks to go over your health history in more detail and to get started with treatment!

If you are already a patient of Dr. Blanks', you may have the test done at your next follow up appointment.