



Subcutaneous Immunotherapy (SCIT)

Patient information factsheet

What is SCIT?

- Subcutaneous immunotherapy is given to a patient by gradually increasing doses of an allergen extract (for example, grass or tree pollen) to reduce the symptoms of their hay fever.
- It was developed over 100 years ago as a therapy and is now in widespread use around the world.
- It is also called 'desensitisation'.

How do I know if subcutaneous immunotherapy will work for me?

- Your Doctor/Nurse will refer you to the allergy clinic for an assessment if they think you need it.
- This is usually because your hay fever (allergic rhinitis) symptoms have not improved, despite taking the recommended medical treatment regularly.
- Before you receive SCIT we will contact you. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions and to decide if you would like to have the therapy. We will also make sure that, if you have asthma, it is under control for you to receive the treatment.

How will it be given?

- Pollinex® is a grass or tree pollen vaccine used for hay fever. You are given this vaccine as an injection into the upper arm.
- The injections must be given in hospital as there is a small risk of a severe allergic reaction.
- You will receive a subcutaneous injection (injections under the skin of the arm) every seven days, for six weeks. You will receive your SCIT at the Roses Day care unit.
- This needs to be repeated for each allergen you are treated for.
- For example, if you have the vaccine for both grass **and** tree pollen, you will receive a total of 12 injections in the year: six injections for each allergen.
- Each series of six injections needs to be completed before the start of the next pollen season and repeated every year for three years.



- You will be assessed on arrival by an Allergy Nurse, and they will watch you for one hour after your injection, to make sure that you have no reactions.
- The total appointment should take about 90 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

- The most common side effects are itchiness and swelling in the arm at the site of injection. This usually happens within 24-48 hours after the injection.
- An ice pack placed onto the injection site can help, and taking an antihistamine (for example, Cetirizine) and/or Paracetamol will usually reduce these symptoms.
- If you have a reaction at home, please measure the size of the swelling, and contact our Allergy Nurses on 0207 288 5315 / 5300 or by email whh-paedallergynurses@nhs.net
- Serious reactions are uncommon but can include a large itchy rash, wheeze (rattling sound in the chest) or a drop in blood pressure (feeling faint).
- These reactions often happen soon after the injection has been given and can be treated while you are still in hospital.
- Although more serious reactions, like anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) are rare, they **can** be life-threatening. This is why we ask you to stay for **one hour** after the injection to make sure you are well enough to go home.

Is there anything that I should not do after the injection?

- Do not do any intense exercise or take hot baths/showers for 24 hours after the injection.
- Do not rub or massage the site, as this can make your body take in the vaccine too quickly and may increase the side effects.

Are there times when I should not have an injection?

- If you are feeling unwell for any reason, your injection appointment must be moved to another day. You must be **well for at least three days before you have your injection**.
- If you have had any other vaccines **in the last seven days**, your allergy vaccine appointment must be moved to another day.
- If you miss a dose, your treatment will take longer.

If you are unsure about attending your appointment or have any questions about the treatment, please contact the **Allergy Nurses** on 0207 288 5315/5300 or by email whh-paedallergynurses@nhs.net



Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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