

Questions and answers about immunotherapy.

- 1 What is the immunotherapy?
- 2 How to administer?
- 3 What reactions can it cause?
- 4 How much time does it takes to get the desired effect?
- 5 Can we combine it with other treatments?

What is the immunotherapy?

It is a treatment of allergy through subcutaneous injections with the involved allergens detected in the previous allergic test; and actually it is the only treatment which can cure the allergy against the others treatments which only improve the symptoms but do not cure and they must be administrated during the whole life of the animal with the adverse effects they cause.

The immunotherapy is made considering the clinical history and the positive allergens of the test, so it is an individual treatment. Those allergens are inoculated in increasing concentrations, so the immune system gets used to them and stops to react against them.

How to administer?

By subcutaneous injections (under the skin) with insulin syringes and small diameter needles. It is very easy to do, so the owner can do it himself with his veterinary's instructions.

The product must be kept in the fridge. The injections must be done one hour before or one hour after the meal at least, never after an effort (long walk, excitement,...) nor when the animal presents symptoms of another disease. It is recommended that the animal should be observed by its owner or another person during the next hour after the injection to value possible reactions, which , although they are usually not severe, they must be reported to the veterinary.

What reactions can it cause?

Sometimes we can see an increase of the pruritus immediately after the injection. This is more probable to happen at the beginning of the treatment or when we change the vial (more concentration of allergen).

Other much less frequent reactions, consist of fatigue, vomits and/or diarrhea, in which case it is preferable to take the animal to the clinic, but you should not worry because these symptoms are easy to control.

How much time does it take to get the desired effect?

The time that each animal needs to notice some improvement is variable. In some cases it can be noticed very quickly although in most cases improvement cannot be seen before 3-4 months after the first injection of the treatment. It is important to be patient and to continue with the immunotherapy at least 1 year before deciding to stop the therapy for lack of efficiency.

When we obtain the improvement of the symptoms, the frequency of the injections is once a month. Don't forget to advise the veterinary one month before finishing the last vial to have the maintenance treatment ready and not interrupt it! The treatment must be applied during 3 years at least, and sometimes it depends of the animal and under the point of view of the veterinary this period can be increased some years more.

In some animals, like in human beings, the immunotherapy is not effective. In this case, the animal must be re-evaluated by the veterinary to decide if the problem is due to frequent complications of the allergy diseases such as bacterium infections, fleas,...which must be treated at the same time, or if it is necessary to reconsider the treatment line changing its formula, dosage or concentration.

Can it combine with other treatments?

Of course, but always under the veterinary prescription. Some of the most frequent treatments are: antihistaminics, corticoids, antibiotics, fatty acid supplements, therapeutic baths,...

In most cases, the allergy, as any chronic diseases, can be controlled but not cured at all. So one of the objectives of the immunotherapy is to decrease to the utmost the administration of drugs with undesirable secondary effects long-term.

