

# Oral Immunotherapy

*Helping to Slowly Decrease Sensitivity  
to Food Allergies*



Allina Health

Your OIT allergist:

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Phone number:

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Clinic name and address:

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**Note: The word “you” in this booklet can apply to either you or your child.**

## Section 1: Oral Immunotherapy

Oral immunotherapy (known as OIT) works by helping you slowly decrease sensitivity to food allergens over time.

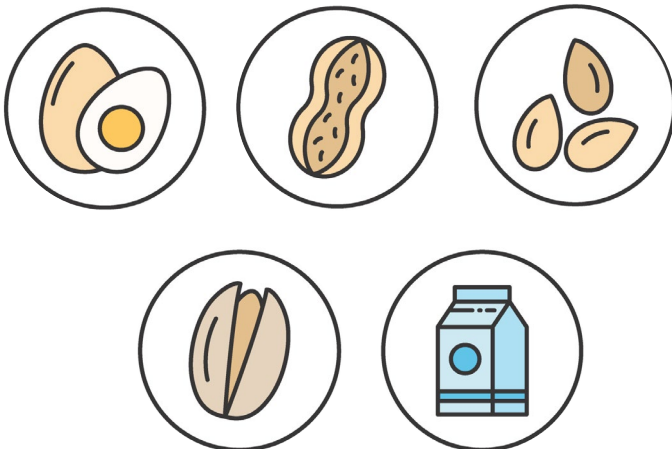
It can help make your reaction to accidental exposure to the food allergen less severe. It is not a cure for food allergies.

OIT is done with an allergist (specially-trained doctor) in a clinic or other health care setting. The process is done over a period of years.

### Food allergies

A food allergy is your body's reaction when you eat a certain food such as milk, egg, wheat or nuts. Your immune system overreacts to a food protein and makes an antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE).

When you eat that food, the IgE antibodies recognize it and launch an immune response. This can cause a severe allergic reaction.



**The food allergens currently available for oral immunotherapy at Allina Health include eggs, peanuts, sesame, tree nuts and milk.**

## How it works

OIT works by:

- desensitizing the IgE antibody that causes your immune system to react
- increasing the immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibody that decreases the chance of a severe reaction.



**OIT will not cure a food allergy nor will it mean that you will be able to eat foods that cause allergy symptoms.**

For example, if you have a peanut allergy and accidentally come into contact with peanuts, it could cause an anaphylactic (a serious, life-threatening) reaction.

With OIT, you eat a very small amount of peanut protein that would not trigger a reaction. This small amount is slowly increased over a period of more than 1 year.

When you reach what is known as the “maintenance dose,” you are less likely to have a life-threatening reaction if you were to eat a small amount of peanut.

The food allergens currently available for OIT at Allina Health include:

- peanut
- tree nuts
- milk
- egg
- sesame.

## What happens during OIT

There are 3 phases of OIT.

- 1. Initial dose escalation.** The first phase of the process takes place in a clinic. Plan to be there for about 6 hours.
  - You receive small doses of the food allergen every 15 minutes.
  - A member of the health care team will watch for signs and symptoms of a reaction.
  - If you can tolerate the first part of the process without a reaction, you can move to the second step.
- 2. Up-dosing.** The second phase of the process takes place in a clinic and at home. Plan to be at the clinic for about 90 minutes for the up-dosing clinic visit. This part of the process lasts 6 to 12 months.
  - You receive consistent, precise amounts of the food allergen every day.
  - The dose will slowly be increased every couple of weeks.
  - A member of the health care team will watch for signs and symptoms of a reaction during for 1 hour during the clinic visit.
  - After you complete the second part of the process without a reaction, you can move to the third step.
- 3. Maintenance.** The third phase of the process takes place at your home. It has no end date.
  - You take a dose every day.
  - The final phase continues over time to help maintain a decreased sensitivity to the food allergen.

## Safety, risks and side effects

### Safety

- The first (dose escalation) and second (up-dosing) phases happen in a clinic or other health care setting. Trained health care staff will attend to you.
- A member of the health care team will watch you for at least 1 hour after receiving the OIT dose.
  - If you have a severe reaction during treatment, a member of the health care team will give an injection of epinephrine and call for emergency medical help right away.

### Risks

- OIT can cause anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions) that may be life-threatening.
- You will need to bring your epinephrine injector to each visit in case of reaction after leaving the clinic.
- You will need to return to the clinic if you have trouble tolerating the home doses during the third (maintenance) phase.

### Side effects

- Mild reactions during the first two phases are common and may include:
  - itching of the throat and mouth
  - stomach pain
  - nausea (feeling like throwing up)
  - vomiting (throwing up)
  - reflux
  - gas. Tell a member of your health care team if you have any of these symptoms.

## Deciding if OIT is right for you

Your allergist will review blood test and skin test results, previous reaction history and may want to do more testing to confirm if you would benefit from OIT.

In general, OIT may be right if you:

- have severe, life-threatening reactions to food allergens
- have trouble avoiding the allergen
- can't fully participate in school, family or social activities because of anxiety about coming in contact with the allergen
- can go to the clinic for regular OIT doses and give regular doses at home on a schedule.

In general, OIT may not be right if you:

- have asthma that is not under control
- have a gastrointestinal tract disease such as eosinophilic esophagitis, celiac disease or food intolerances.

Even with OIT, you will still need to carry an epinephrine injector and avoid eating the food that causes the allergy.





## Section 2: Initial Dose Escalation

### General information

- Manage any non-food allergies you have.
- Do not make any changes to your medicines before your first OIT visit. Keep taking antihistamines, allergy shots, steroid inhalers or your regular medicines.
- Tell your OIT allergist if you are taking a beta-blocker.

Reschedule the clinic visit if you do not feel well, are sick or if you have a fever.

### Before your first visit

The clinic visit will last about 6 hours.

- Eat a small meal before arriving at the clinic.  
Do not come to the visit overfull.
- Bring these with you to the clinic:
  - epinephrine injector
  - inhaler (if you have asthma)
  - insulated cooler to bring your solution home
  - food, snacks and beverages items you were able to tolerate in the past
  - items to keep you busy while you wait.

## **During your first visit**

- Doses of the allergen will be given by trained staff every 15 to 30 minutes.
- The doses will be increased over about 5 hours.
- Members of the health care team will closely watch you to make sure all of the doses are tolerated.
- Doses will stop when:
  - the highest dosage is reached
  - or
  - there is any sign or symptom that you react to the allergen.
- There will be a 1-hour wait period after the last dose to watch for a delayed reaction.

## Section 3: Up-dosing

### General information

- Up-dosing takes about 6 to 12 months with consistent, precise amounts of the food allergen taken every day to reach the maintenance phase.
- You will need to come back to your allergist's office every 10 to 14 days to receive the up-dose.
- A member of the health care team will watch you for 1 hour after the dose.
- You should avoid high physical activity such as any exercise that would raise your resting heart rate 1 hour after leaving the clinic.

### At-home dosing

#### How to give injections

- Your OIT allergist will give you a liquid solution and one oral syringe for dosing at home.
- Keep track of when you take each dose and any side effects you have.
- Keep the solution in the refrigerator.
- Take the dose once each day.
- Be calm 30 minutes before the dose. For instance, do not exercise, take a hot shower or get emotionally upset.
- Try to take your dose at the same time each day. (You do have a 3-hour window around the dose time. For example, if you take your dose at 6 p.m. today, you can take it between 3 and 9 p.m. tomorrow.)
- Shake or stir the solution before measuring each dose.
- Only use the measured syringe you received from your OIT allergist.

- Take your dose on a full stomach.
- After each dose, rinse your mouth and drink a few gulps of water to make sure the allergen does not linger in the mouth and throat.
- Wash the oral syringe with soap and water after each dose. Let it air dry.
- Be calm 30 minutes after the dose.
- **Do not sleep for 1 hour after the dose.** Have a responsible adult stay with you.

### **When to stop taking your at-home dose**

Contact your OIT allergist if you are unsure about dosing.

**Do not** take your at-home dose and contact your OIT allergist:

- if you are sick or have a fever (This includes vomiting, having a rash or hives, having a fever, or having a sore throat.)
- on the day of your up-dosing clinic visit
- if the solution smells or tastes different or if you think the solution has spoiled
- if you missed 2 or more doses in a row.

## **What to do if you have a reaction at home**

If you have a severe reaction or anaphylaxis:

- follow your Emergency Action Plan right away
- **do not wait to contact your OIT allergist before giving epinephrine and calling 911.**

Report all side effects — including those that are mild or not life-threatening — to your OIT allergist right away.

## **When to contact your OIT allergist**

Contact your OIT allergist if:

- the syringe breaks
- there is a reaction at the shot site
- you do not want to continue OIT.







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