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## **Administering Immunotherapy Injections To Your Pet**

The injections your pet will be giving have many different names to describe the injections. Some of the common names are hyposensitization, desensitization, allergy or immunotherapy injections. Giving hyposensitization injections to a pet is a thought few people relish, but it is really very easy and painless. It may take you a few times before you are comfortable with the procedure. The instructions are intended as a reference, should you forget any of the details. Please contact CVDA or your veterinarian if you have any questions that are not answered in this reference sheet.

### **ALLERGEN**

The injection solution, called “allergen”, is initially provided to you in three vials, labeled VIAL 1, VIAL 2 and VIAL 3. Vial 3 is the strongest, which is easy to tell because of its dark color. The other two vials are simply weaker dilutions of the material in vial 3.

These vials contain extracts of the substances your pet is allergic to. You will be injecting tiny amounts of the weakest solution (vial 1) at first and slowly increasing the amount and concentration until your pet can tolerate a larger amount of the strongest dilution (vial 3).

The vials of allergens must be stored in the refrigerator, but it will not harm them to be at room temperature for short periods of time, for example to be mail to you.

### **SYRINGES**

The syringes you will receive are disposable and “single-use” only. Return used syringes to CVDA or your veterinarian for disposal. We suggest keeping the used syringes in a used coffee can or plastic container with a lid until they are taken to your veterinarian. It is important to assure that children and pets do not get a hold of syringes and needles (they are not toys).

To help you understand syringes more, 1 ml is the same as 1 cc, but for uniformity this paper uses “ml”. The syringe will hold a maximum of 1.0 ml. They are marked in increments of 0.1 ml along the right side of the barrel. The correct volume is measured from the end of the syringe to the tip of the black plunger.

## THE INJECTION SCHEDULE

The schedule you will receive indicates which vial to use, how much to give, and when to give it. Please read your individualized schedule.

Start with vial 1. The amount to give for the first injection is just a small amount in the tip of the syringe. The dose increases with each injection until you reach a maximum dose of vial 1- that is nearly the whole syringe full. Then, you switch to vial 2 and start again with a small amount and gradually increase to the maximum dose. Then you switch to vial 3 and repeat the process again. Once you reach the maximum dose for vial 3, you are at your pet's "maintenance" dose. From this point on, all injections you give will typically be the same; only the intervals between injections will change. Again, we urge to follow your specific individualized schedule.

## REFILLS

The initial set of three vials will last approximately six weeks. When you begin to run out of the last vial, please call Chesapeake Veterinary Dermatology Associates Allergen Hotline at 410-828-0911 to order a refill. Because the allergen solution is custom-prepared to your pet's needs, it does take some time to be made up. We ask you to allow one week for a refill if you are going to pick it up and two weeks if we will be mailing it to you. Remember, injections should be given year-round. Full benefits are often not seen until the second year. If you any questions at any time please feel free to contact us.

## FILLING THE SYRINGE WITH ALLERGEN

1. GENTLY invert (rock back and forth) the vial once or twice. Do NOT shake the vial.
2. Remove outer packaging material from the syringe and needle
3. Pull the plastic needle guard STRAIGHT OFF the needle. Do not twist or the needle will come off.
4. Insert the needle through the center of the rubber stopper in the correct vial.
5. Turn syringe and vial upside down, then pull back on the plunger to draw allergen into the syringe. Draw more allergen than you would actually need.
6. Do not remove syringe from vial yet. Inspect for air bubbles, which are usually there. Tap the syringe with your finger to get the bubbles to all float to the tip of the syringe.
7. Now, push on the plunger to expel the air bubbles back into the vial, and set the rubber plunger at the desired volume. NOTE: It will **not** harm you pet if you accidentally inject some air bubbles under the skin, but the bubbles in the syringe do interfere with accurate measurement.
8. Now, pull the needle out of the vial.
9. Allow the syringe to set a few minutes or hold it in your hand to warm the solution before it is injected; no more than room temperature.

## MAKING THE INJECTION

1. Hold the syringe in your dominant hand as if it were a dart.
2. Have someone else hold your pet; this is just to keep him/her still for a minute. You should not need excessive restraint for this.
3. Pull the skin between the shoulder blades up firmly to make a “tent.”
4. **Quickly and steadily** push the needle through the animal’s skin towards the bottom of the “tent”, as far as it will go. The needles are thin and sharp, and it is easy and painless. However, take care to push the needle through one layer of skin and not into your own finger, or into the animals muscle or out through the other side of the “tent.”
5. Make sure the syringe and needle are pressed well against the skin; push on the plunger steadily to inject all of the allergen into your pet.
6. Withdraw the needle and dispose of the syringe in the container you have prepared. Do **NOT** try to place the needle cap back on the syringe. Place the cap in the container with the used syringes.
7. Reward your pet with a treat and lavish praise immediately after the injection. This will help the procedure to be pleasurable and your pet to look forward to the procedure-all they think about is the treat! If your pet is on a food trial make sure that the treat is acceptable to give during the trial.
8. It is not necessary to swab the skin with alcohol to “sterilize” it before giving the injections. Due to thick hair coat and type of bacteria on the animal’s skin surface, swabbing with antiseptic or alcohol is not effective. In fact, it may cause the injection to sting if you use alcohol first.