

# THE ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC

Andrew C. Engler, M.D.

June Y. Zhang, M.D.

290 Baldwin Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401

(650) 343-4597 FAX (650) 343- 3402

[www.theallergyclinic.com](http://www.theallergyclinic.com)

---

NEWSLETTER

November 2011

---

## **Immunotherapy: Is it best to muster the cluster?**

Allergy Immunotherapy is the medical term for a very effective treatment to help you become less allergic. The most common form of allergy immunotherapy is injection immunotherapy or allergy shots. This is a process where immunotherapy is gradually given in a steady process to "teach" your immune system a better way to work and is the closest we have to a cure.

While no allergy treatment is 100% effective for all patients, most patients dramatically improve and immunotherapy usually provides a better life style than the alternative, which is the ongoing use of pills or sprays to relieve allergy symptoms. These medicines only give you temporary relief and when you stop taking medications the benefit goes away; on the other hand, immunotherapy retrains your body's response and helps you become less allergic for long term relief.

Immunotherapy is a very effective treatment but is a long term commitment for patients and sometimes can be inconvenient. For some patients who have time constraints, there is an alternative immunotherapy choice called "Cluster Immunotherapy" which we are now providing in our office. Patients who are considering immunotherapy treatment may want to explore this as another option. Cluster Immunotherapy usually allows the patient to reach their maintenance dose more rapidly, which will allow the patient to begin experiencing the benefits of allergy immunotherapy sooner. Another benefit is your time commitment may be decreased because Cluster Immunotherapy typically requires fewer visits to reach the target or maintenance dose. Additionally, patients usually receive fewer injections than they would receive with conventional immunotherapy. Most of the time, during

the buildup phase, the patient is able to receive the equivalent of a month's worth of treatment in one visit to the office.

This benefit occurs as a series of injections are given over a 2 hour period, hence the name: Cluster Immunotherapy. Although the risk of reactions is slightly higher, we can usually control this by pre-medicating the patient with antihistamines before their cluster visit. In a number of cases, Cluster Immunotherapy may be more convenient for the patient and can reduce their costs.

If this is something you wish to consider for yourself or a loved one, please discuss it with one of our health care providers to see if you would be a candidate for this treatment option.

## **The use of Exhaled Nitric Oxide (eNO) is now considered the gold standard in clinical practice.**

Although we have recognized the benefit of eNO testing for many years, it is finally an Official Clinical Practice Guideline as announced by the American Thoracic Society in September. The American Thoracic Society now strongly recommends the use of eNO as an important tool in the routine management of asthma and has published clinical guidelines which will standardize the approach by which healthcare providers use this test to manage patients with airway disease.

Patients with respiratory allergies such as hayfever or sinus problems can have 20 times the risk of developing asthma as those who do not have allergies. Therefore, it was good news when, in 2008, the FDA approved the clinical use of eNO monitoring, to measure bronchial airway inflammation, thus enabling the health care provider to evaluate their patient's respiratory status more effectively. The eNO system is designed to quantitatively measure exhaled nitric oxide in human breath as a marker of inflammation in persons with allergies,

asthma and other respiratory conditions. This objective biomarker also helps healthcare providers evaluate the patient's response to anti-inflammatory therapy and, if indicated, allows reduction of medication dosage without diminishing treatment outcomes.

Dr. Engler was among the first physicians in the community to begin using eNO evaluation in the management of patients with allergies and other respiratory problems. With this tool, we have improved our ability to diagnose and treat many of our patients and we are happy that we have been able to provide you with this valuable procedure for many years. We are even happier now that many insurance companies are including this as a covered benefit for our patients, saving them out of pocket costs for a treatment that has proven very beneficial!

## **It's that time of the year again, it's flu season!**

Seasonal influenza (the flu) results in higher morbidity and mortality rates among patients with certain chronic medical conditions such as allergies and asthma. This is a reminder to all our patients that we recommend an influenza vaccination annually. If you want more details regarding the safety of receiving the influenza vaccine or if you or a loved one have an egg allergy and have been told you should not receive a flu shot, please visit our website [www.theallergyclinic.com](http://www.theallergyclinic.com) and go to our Newsletter archives section and click on November 2010. There you can read more about scientific studies showing that most patients allergic to eggs, (long thought to be a contraindication for receiving the flu shot), can now safely receive this vaccination.

Thanksgiving Office Schedule Wed, Nov 23 - Open 9am-5pm Thurs, Nov 24 - Closed Friday, Nov 25 -Closed Sat, Nov 26 - Open 9am-12pm
---