

Oral Immunotherapy

Hope for Those With Food Allergies



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Stacy Silvers, MD

Allergist, Medical Director

Dr. Silvers is a board certified allergist specializing in environmental and food allergy diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Dr. Silvers oversees our allergy program and protocols, and also leads the food allergy and oral immunotherapy (OIT) program at Aspire Allergy & Sinus. Dr. Silvers is considered an expert in the field of food allergy diagnosis and treatment. He is also a member of the American Board of Pediatrics and American Board of Allergy & Immunology. In 2019, Dr. Silvers was named **Best Allergist** in the Statesman's Best of the Best Contest.



Nana Mireku, MD

Allergist

Nana Mireku, MD is board certified in allergy, asthma and immunology by the American Board of Allergy and Immunology. Dr. Mireku is also board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics. She graduated from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine in 2003. As an allergy sufferer herself and being the parent of a food-allergic child, she is passionate about providing relief for her allergic patients. She believes in empowering her patients and their families through education of their diseases.

What is OIT and What is the Process?

Food allergies affect 1 in 13 children, but oral immunotherapy (OIT) can help. With OIT, the patient receives small amounts of a food allergen to decrease their sensitivity, gradually increasing the dose over the six months to 12 months.

What Comes First?

Typically before starting OIT, patients receive both a skin test and a blood test to determine their allergies. And after that, a food challenge is done to determine the severity of the allergy and a good starting point for OIT.

Food challenges are known as the gold standard in food allergy diagnosis. They take about three to four hours and are performed in-office under physician supervision. Increasing amounts of food are given every 20 minutes. The patient is then observed to make sure there is no severe reaction. If the patient shows an adverse reaction, the next step is to discuss oral immunotherapy (OIT).

The OIT Process

Dosing

The initial dose is given over a six to eight hour time period, where a very small amount of food is ingested every 25 minutes. Instructions are given to take the final dose that was tolerated every day for at least a week. The patient will then return to take a slightly higher dose the following week.

Initially, doses are given in the form of a diluted solution. Within a few weeks, the doses are increased to small amounts of the food allergen. At the end of the program, the patient is challenged of a full serving of the allergenic food. If there is no reaction, they're instructed to take a maintenance dose every day. During the maintenance phase, the food allergen can be eaten freely.

Age Guidelines

Food allergy testing: 4 months and up

Food challenges: 4 months and up

OIT: 9 months and up



Common Foods We Test and Treat

- Almond
- Brazil Nut
- Cashew
- Egg
- Hazelnut
- Lentil
- Macadamia Nut
- Milk
- Peanut
- Pecan
- Pistachio
- Sesame Seed
- Sunflower Seed
- Wheat

How Does OIT Compare to Food Allergy Drops?

OIT and food allergy drops are similar in that they are both used to desensitize you to an allergen. In general, OIT is used as a long-term approach to fight food allergies, with results in patients being able to eat a full serving of the previously allergenic food in about six months to a year. When patients complete OIT, there is generally no need to read food labels for fear of cross contamination.

Food allergy drops protect against accidental exposure but do not provide long-term immunity against food allergies. Patients on food allergy drops still need to be diligent about reading food labels. Food allergy drops can be a great way to prepare the body for OIT if a person is severely allergenic.

Patients on both therapies are recommended to carry an EpiPen as a precaution, although most will never need to use it.



Oral Immunotherapy FAQ

What Food Allergies Can You Treat with OIT?

Our OIT program covers allergies for egg, dairy, fish, soy, sesame seed, sunflower seed, peanut, chick pea, lentil, and tree nuts (almond, cashew, hazelnut, walnut).

How Many Allergies Can You Treat At Once?

Treatment will vary from patient to patient, but the most we can treat is 3 food allergies (at a time).

What is the Goal of OIT?

The goal of OIT is unique for each patient depending on history, testing, and family preference. Many choose OIT so that over time they can freely eat food that previously threatened their health. Patients that "graduate" our OIT program will continue to keep taking one serving of that food every day to keep up their resistance.

How Do I Know if I or My Child is a Candidate for OIT?

OIT is worth considering for anyone suffering from food allergies. We'll be able to determine if OIT is a good choice for you or your child in our first consult. Keep in mind that this is at minimum at 6-month commitment where you'll be visiting our clinic weekly to increase doses.

What is the Risk of OIT?

Whenever you're dealing with allergy immunotherapy, there is a risk of reaction. We'll be introducing and increasing doses of food allergens over the period of treatment. If there ever is a serious reaction to the food, our staff is available 24/7 to address any concerns.

How Long Does the Process Take?

Most of our patients finish the OIT process between 6-10 months. Most "hiccups" in the process come from delaying a visit due to unrelated sickness.

Does Insurance Cover It?

Some insurances do cover OIT however costs vary depending on the insurance plan.

How much does it cost?

Initial Food Challenge: \$175/hour (up to six hours)

Program Fee: \$500

A \$500 program fee, not billable to insurance, is due at the time of scheduling. This fee covers the OIT solution throughout the length of treatment, a scale to measure foods at home, and full access to the Spruce app, a 24/7 HIPAA compliant text app you can use at any time.

You will also be invited to our private Food Allergy Support Group where you will have access to a private Facebook group with over 1,000 members who are either current OIT families or graduates. This is an excellent resource and a great way to get support and encouragement along your journey.

There are 25 additional appointments associated with treatment and these may be billable to insurance. Depending on plans, exact cost may vary.

 **CareCredit**[™] is also accepted.



**Set up your
appointment
today!**

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