



Joint Council of Allergy,
Asthma & Immunology



RESPIRATORY ALLERGIES: AN AMERICAN EPIDEMIC

Respiratory allergies are on the rise in the United States, currently affecting more than 50 million Americans. Every year, more adults and children are diagnosed with allergies, and overall health care costs increase.

Allergic Rhinitis by the Numbers:

- **1 in 5** Americans have an allergy
- Allergic rhinitis, the most common respiratory allergy, is the **5th** leading chronic disease
- The annual cost of allergic rhinitis is **\$11.2 billion**
- **13.4 million** annual ambulatory care visits with a primary diagnosis of allergic rhinitis
- Allergic rhinitis is the cause of **3.5 million** lost days of work
- ... And **2 million** missed school days
- Americans spend **\$6.5 billion** on allergy medications that provide temporary relief
- Only **2-9%** of those with respiratory allergies receive treatment that can provide long-term benefits

What Can Be Done:

- While there is no cure for allergies, allergy-specific immunotherapy (SIT) – also known as allergy shots - can modify and prevent disease progression
- Other benefits of SIT include:
 - Reduction in symptoms
 - Decreased need for prescription and over-the-counter medications
 - Asthma prevention
 - Improvement in the severity of existing asthma
 - Prevention of additional allergies (i.e. food and drug allergy)
 - Health care cost reduction of an astonishing **33-41%**

Health Care Savings of SIT:

- **\$1,600** per child during an 18-month period
- Children who received SIT compared to those that didn't had **33%** lower costs
- **\$6,300** per adult during an 18-month period
- Adults who received SIT compared to those that didn't had **50%** lower health care costs
- Studies in Europe have shown SIT results in savings as much as **80%**

When left underdiagnosed and undertreated, respiratory allergies can lead to serious health complications and increase health care costs. Because of these consequences, early diagnosis and aggressive treatment should be national priorities.

Footnote: Hankin CS, Cox L, Bronstone A, Wang Z. Allergy immunotherapy: Reduced health care costs in adults and children with allergic rhinitis. *J Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2013 Apr;131(4):1084-91. PubMed PMID:

(continue reading on reverse)

WHAT IS AN ALLERGIST AND IMMUNOLOGIST?

An Allergist and Immunologist physician is a doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of allergic diseases and asthma. They complete 4 years of medical school, complete a general residency in internal medicine or pediatrics, and must pass an exam to become Board Certified. Following this residency, these doctors spend two additional years of training, which is called a Fellowship, learning about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of immune system problems such as asthma and other allergic conditions.

Upon completion of an Allergy/Immunology Fellowship, the doctor can practice Allergy and Immunology and can become a certified Allergist after passing another exam sponsored by the American Board of Allergy and Immunology.

Allergists and Immunologists are specialists who can treat:

- **Asthma**
- **Allergic Rhinitis**
- **Anaphylaxis**
- **Atopic dermatitis or eczema**
- **Food allergies**
- **Hives or urticaria**
- **Immune deficiencies**
- **Sinus problems**

Patient Population:

Allergists typically treat both adults and children with asthma and allergies.

Advantages of Being Treated by an Allergist/Immunologist:

An allergist can assist in getting better control of a patient's asthma. Other advantages include:

- **Better quality of care compared to a primary care physician**
- **Improved quality of life and patient satisfaction related to asthma**
- **Access to specific testing such as skin testing and treatment with allergy shots or immunotherapy**
- **Patients treated by allergists are less likely to be admitted to the hospital, need an Emergency Department visit and treatment, require oral steroids, or overuse their rescue inhaler.**