

How to give your pet allergy injections

The Vials - Hyposensitization or allergen vials are numbered Vial 1 (very watery or dilute), Vial 2 (moderately dilute), and Vial 3 (dark and concentrated). They all contain the same natural substances that your pet is allergic to but Vials 1 and 2 are diluted with sterile saline. This allows us to start the injection process with a very minute amount of allergen. As you progress with injections of higher volumes and increased concentration, you will be slowly and safely increasing the amount of the offending allergens you give to your pet.

Remember these vials must be stored in the refrigerator. If they are left at room temperature for more than 48 hours, the proteins in the vials begin to degrade and the serum (while still safe for your pet) will no longer be effective at controlling the allergy. Heating above 100°F or freezing are also likely to destroy the proteins. **Handle the vials with care, they are made of glass and can be broken.**

The Syringe - To give the injection, the first step is loading the syringe. Refer to your allergy schedule to determine which vial (1, 2 or 3) will be used and the amount to be injected. The volume will vary between 0.1 mL and 1.0 mL. Milliliter (mL) and cubic centimeter (cc) are different measures for exactly the same volume. Once you know the volume to be given and which vial to use, remove an unused syringe from its sterile packaging. Next, pull back on the syringe plunger until the top of the plunger is at the desired volume thus filling the syringe with air. Remove the needle cover by pulling directly away from the syringe. Next, insert the needle through the correct vial's rubber stopper and inject the air you previously drew into the syringe. This will equalize the pressure so the next time you use the vial you won't have difficulty drawing the serum. Now flip the vial and syringe over so the vial is above with the syringe beneath. Pull back on the syringe plunger and draw the allergen solution into the syringe. Fill the syringe with more allergen than you need. Next, tap the syringe with your fingernail to get any air bubbles to go to the top (needle end) of the syringe. Finally, push the plunger back up until the top of the black rubber stopper is at the desired volume. You should notice any bubbles going back into the vial when you do this. It is O.K. if a few small air bubbles remain, but it is desirable to get any larger bubbles out of the syringe as they change the volume being injected. Injected air bubbles are not a threat to your pet's well being as the injections go under the skin, not into a vein. **It is a good idea to put the allergen vials back into the refrigerator now, so they aren't knocked over or forgotten during the injection process.** Now your syringe is loaded and you are ready to give your pet the injection.

Giving the injection - The next step in giving the injection is to get your pet into an environment where you are in control. On a table top often works well. You may need someone to help you give the injections at first. Next, gently but firmly gather a pinch of skin between your fingers and lift it away from your pet's body. This will form a "tent" or space under the skin into which you will inject the serum. You can form this tent over the shoulder blades or along the back, anywhere that there is loose skin can work. You can choose a different site each time you inject, or use the same area over and over again if you find a particular spot works well. The larger the "tent" you form, the easier and more comfortable the injection will be for your pet. With your other hand, insert the syringe needle through the skin and into the tent. Bury the needle, as the whole length is needed to completely pass through the skin. Now depress the plunger to inject the serum. Finally, withdraw the needle and release the tent. Rub the area to feel for any moisture that would indicate you missed and squirted the allergen on top of the skin. If this occurs, you should repeat the injection. Immediately praise your pet, stroke and play with them and if possible give them a treat. This makes the injection process a positive experience and will make future injections much easier for you.

Cleaning Up - The final step is to dispose of the used syringe. These must be handled as medical waste. Save the needles in a puncture proof container and return them to a veterinarian for safe disposal. Keep all syringes out of the reach of children.

Possible side effects of Hyposensitization

More common side effects

Increased itching or redness after injection

Hives, swelling at the site of injection

If these side effects occur, call Rocky Mountain Veterinary Dermatology. The injections can be adjusted, or preventative medications can be prescribed.

Very Rare side effect

Vomiting, diarrhea, wheezing, hives, facial or leg swelling.

These are signs of anaphylaxis ("bee sting reaction" or allergic reaction) and you must take your pet **IMMEDIATELY** to a veterinarian for treatment. These reactions are **very rare** but can be life threatening.

Injection reactions almost always occur within 20 minutes of the injection. It is recommended to supervise your pet for 20 minutes after every injection.