

# Your immunotherapy management plan – Oralvac<sup>®</sup>

Name .....

Date of birth .....

Date.....

You have been prescribed the following treatment:

Sub-lingual immunotherapy

Name of medication	Amount	How often

When should you start taking your immunotherapy?

.....

You are on year ..... of a 3-year treatment plan

## What is sublingual immunotherapy?

Allergic rhinitis can significantly impact on sleep, home, and school performance, and can result in a substantially reduced quality of life.

Immunotherapy is recommended for patients over 2 years old who, despite allergen avoidance and trying maximal recommended medication, still have uncontrolled symptoms of rhinitis.

The sublingual immunotherapy you have been prescribed is called Oralvac®. It comes in a small bottle with a pump, designed to deliver drops of the allergen (either tree pollen, grass pollen or house dust mite) under the tongue. By taking a small dose you can build up a tolerance to the allergen. Hopefully, this will reduce the symptoms of your allergic rhinitis. Immunotherapy is the only treatment which aims to treat the underlying cause of an allergy, rather than just the symptoms.

Immunotherapy has been shown to be effective in inducing long-term reduction in rhinitis symptoms. However, the treatment is taken over three years, so it is important that while you are taking the immunotherapy you still take your regular rhinitis medication. The aim is that by the end of the treatment programme the symptoms and reliance on medication have reduced.

## **Should I continue my regular rhinitis treatments while I'm taking immunotherapy?**

Yes, it is important that you continue taking your regular anti-histamines, nasal spray, and eye drops.

Immunotherapy treats the underlying causes of rhinitis, but it will not begin to treat your immediate symptoms until towards the end of the 3-year course.

## How should you take the drops?

Your drops should be taken 'sub-lingually' which means that they are designed to be given under the tongue where they are absorbed.

1. Wash and dry your hands
2. Food and drink in the mouth can affect the absorption of the drops, so it is important to **not eat or drink** for 5 minutes before and 5 minutes after you administer the drops.
3. Lift up your tongue, place the end of the pump into the space under your tongue, and fully press the pump 1-3 times (depending on how many drops you need to administer).
4. The drops should remain under your tongue for 1-2 minutes so that they can be absorbed. After this time you may swallow.
5. Strenuous exercise should also be avoided for 1 hour before, and 1 hour after taking your drops.



## What side effects might I experience?

The most common side effect is itching in the mouth. This is a temporary effect that starts after taking the drops, and normally last for minutes to hours. After about a week of treatment, most patients no longer experience this.

Other, less common, side effects include itching of the ears, sneezing, throat irritation, swelling of the mouth, abdominal pain or nausea (feeling sick). As with itching of the mouth, these side effects mainly happen during the first week of treatment and do not last long.

If any of these symptoms continue after the first week of treatment, and are bothering you, you can take an antihistamine 1 hour before you administer your immunotherapy. This should help to reduce your symptoms.

If you experience side effects that get worse each day, beyond the first week of treatment, and do not improve with antihistamines, or if your asthma symptoms get worse while you are on this treatment, please contact the nursing team for further advice.

Please refer to the manufacturer's information leaflet for more information about possible side effects. You should contact your GP or seek medical attention immediately if you experience a more severe reaction.

## Frequently asked questions

### **What should I do if a dose is forgotten?**

You may take your drops later in the day if possible, but otherwise just continue with your normal once-a-day routine. Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose. If the treatment was interrupted for more than one week, then you should tell your clinic as soon as you can.

### **What should I do if a tooth is lost or removed?**

If you lose a tooth or have a tooth removed by your dentist you should stop your immunotherapy treatment for seven days to allow the oral cavity to heal.

### **Should I continue my treatment on holiday?**

Yes. Travel with your immunotherapy in your hand luggage, and continue with your daily dosing regimen.

### **Should I continue taking my drops if I am unwell?**

If you have been prescribed antibiotics by your GP for an infection, if you have a temperature, an asthma attack or if you are unwell enough to be off school or college, you should stop taking your drops until you are over the worst of the illness. If you have to stop taking your drops for more than seven days, you should contact the allergy team so that they can tell you how to safely begin treatment again.

### **How should my Oralvac® be stored?**

Any unopened bottles should be stored in the fridge (between 2-8C). Once a bottle is open, it can be stored out of the fridge and it is usable for up to 10 weeks, as long as it does not reach temperatures above 25C.

### **What should I do if I need a vaccination?**

If you are having any vaccinations, such as for the flu, you should not take your immunotherapy on the day you have them. You should wait until any vaccine reactions have resolved completely before restarting your therapy.

### **How many appointments will I need?**

An allergy specialist is the only person who can start your Oralvac® treatment. They will give you your first dose and then monitor any side effects before deciding if it is appropriate for you to continue with the treatment. Each appointment will last approximately one hour.

### **Tree pollen only**

Treatment needs to be started before the tree pollen season begins. You will receive an invite in late summer to start tree pollen Oralvac® treatment in the autumn. You will have two appointments, one week apart. Each appointment will last up to an hour. You will receive enough immunotherapy to last for your first year of treatment.

### **Tree pollen AND grass pollen**

Treatment needs to be started before the tree and grass pollen seasons begin. You will receive an invite in late summer to start tree/grass pollen Oralvac®. We aim to start tree pollen treatment in the autumn and grass pollen in the New Year. You will have two appointments to begin tree pollen and another two to begin grass pollen. Each appointment will last up to an hour. You will receive enough immunotherapy to last for your first year of treatment.

## House dust mite

Once the medication is ordered, it can take up to eight weeks to arrive from the supplier. Once it arrives we will contact you to start your treatment. You will have two appointments, one week apart. You will receive a 6-month supply (two boxes) of treatment at first. We ask you to email us, **e:** [SLIT@GSTT.nhs.uk](mailto:SLIT@GSTT.nhs.uk) when you open your second box of Oralvac<sup>®</sup> to request your next supply. Please tell us your name and date of birth in this email.

## Further sources of information

**Allergy UK Helpline**, providing independent, confidential advice and support, **t:** 01322 619898, Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm

### Contact us

If you have any questions regarding your immunotherapy treatment, you can contact the allergy nurses at Evelina London Children's Hospital, **t:** 020 7188 9783.

Alternatively you can book a telephone appointment with an allergy nurse specialist online at **w:** [www.zesty.co.uk/practices/childrens-allergy-nurse-helpline](http://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/childrens-allergy-nurse-helpline)

If you are running out of Oralvac<sup>®</sup> and have not been given an appointment to see the allergy team, please email, **e:** [SLIT@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:SLIT@gstt.nhs.uk)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at Evelina London, please visit, **w:** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

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