

New research shows 73 percent of allergists prescribe under-the-tongue allergy tablets

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Allergy shots (subcutaneous immunotherapy or SCIT) have been available for more than 100 years. Allergy tablets (sublingual immunotherapy or SLIT) have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the United States for four years. A new study in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) shows that most American allergists now prescribe the tablets for some patients to treat certain allergies. The study was developed by the ACAAI Immunotherapy and Diagnostics Committee.

"Five years ago, [allergy](#) tablets hadn't been approved by the FDA and weren't being prescribed for people with allergies in the U.S.," said allergist Anita Sivam, DO, ACAAI member and lead author. "Allergists were prescribing [allergy shots](#) because they were, and continue to be, a proven effective treatment. Once allergy tablets were approved in 2014, allergists began prescribing them for their patients. Of the 268 US allergists who responded to our survey in 2018, 197 (73 percent) reported prescribing allergy tablets."

Allergy tablets are available to treat northern grass pollens, Timothy grass pollen, ragweed and house dust mite. The northern grass pollens and the Timothy grass pollen tablets are both approved down to age 5 years and the other two for those 18 years and older. The tablets differ from allergy shots because after the first dose is given in an allergist's office, they can be taken at home. The tablets are placed under the tongue and dissolve.

In immunotherapy, the regular administration of the allergen doses causes your [immune system](#) to become less sensitive to the allergen. Reducing your sensitivity reduces your allergy symptoms.

"One of the big differences between shots and tablets is that shots are formulated by your allergist to treat your specific allergy or allergies," says

allergist Mike Tankersley, MD, MBA, vice-chair of the ACAAI Immunotherapy and Diagnostics Committee and co-author of the study. "Tablets target a single allergy, and our study found that was the main barrier for allergists in prescribing tablets. If a patient has more than one allergy and is able to travel regularly to receive allergy shots, an [allergist](#) may recommend shots over tablets."

Both shots and tablets—the only FDA-approved immunotherapy treatments for allergies—are successful because they work by changing your immune system. They decrease some cells, chemicals and antibodies in your system that cause allergy symptoms and increase others that improve health. Allergy shots and tablets allow you to encounter your allergens without having a reaction. Immunotherapy also reduces the inflammation that characterizes hay fever and asthma, so many sufferers find their symptoms improve.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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