

## **ALLERGY SHOTS DURING PREGNANCY MAY DECREASE ALLERGIES IN CHILDREN**

Expecting mothers who suffer from allergies may want to consider another vaccination in addition to the flu shot and Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis). A study presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) found pregnant women who receive allergy shots, also known as immunotherapy, during pregnancy may decrease their baby's chance of developing allergies.

"Our research found trends suggesting women receiving allergy shots either before or during pregnancy reduced their child's chances of having asthma, food allergies, or eczema," said allergist Jay Lieberman, MD, ACAAI member. "Prior studies have suggested that mothers can pass protective factors to their fetus that may decrease their child's chance of developing allergic disease, and these protective factors are increased with allergy immunotherapy."

While there is no "cure" for the more than 50 million Americans suffering from allergies, immunotherapy is known to modify and prevent disease progression as significantly improve symptoms.

According to ACAAI, allergies tend to run in families. If both parents have allergies, their children have a 75 percent chance of being allergic. If only one parent is allergic, or if a relative has allergies, the child has a 30 to 40 percent chance of having an allergy. If neither parent has allergy, the chance of a child developing an allergy is only 10 to 15 percent.

"More research is needed to understand if mothers can truly prevent allergies in their children by receiving allergy shots during or before pregnancy," said Dr. Lieberman. "However, these study results show there is a strong association which is very encouraging as allergists explore this possibility."

If a specific allergy is identified and cannot be avoided, or medications are not sufficient, allergists prescribe immunotherapy to control and often eliminate symptoms. Immunity does not occur immediately, but some patients do begin to feel better quickly. Most patients receive monthly injections for three to five years once they reach the maintenance dose.

"Allergy shots are not only effective but cost efficient," said allergist Warner Carr, MD, chair of the ACAAI Immunotherapy and Diagnostics Committee. "Immunotherapy can result in health care savings of 33 to 41 percent."

It's important to note that starting an immunotherapy regimen for expecting mothers is relatively contraindicated. It is, however, advisable to continue allergy injections if started prior to the pregnancy. Research shows that by continuing a compliant immunotherapy schedule expecting mothers not only improve their quality of life but that of child as well.