

## Successful Seasonal Allergies Treatment Shows Promise for Milk Allergies

For years, allergists have used a seasonal allergy treatment called Immunotherapy, which is more affectionately known by patients as "allergy shots." While there had been great interest in trialing this therapy on food allergies, it had to be approached with great care since food allergies can cause severe and even life-threatening reactions. But the scientists of Johns Hopkins Children's Center and Duke University persevered, and have been rewarded with a couple of successful Oral Immunotherapy trials, including one for milk allergies specifically ...

Admittedly, it was a very small trial, with just 19 patients, but it did qualify as "the first-ever double-blinded and placebo-controlled study of milk immunotherapy." The subjects were children ranging from 6 to 17 years of age who lived with a severe and persistent milk allergy. The set-up was virtually foolproof, where not even the researchers knew which patients were receiving milk powder and which were receiving the look-alike, taste-alike placebo while the study was being conducted. A dozen of them received progressively higher doses of milk protein, while the remaining seven received the placebo.

At the beginning of the study, the children could tolerate an average of 40mg or ¼ teaspoon of milk. Researchers followed allergic reactions over four months among 19 children with severe and persistent milk allergy, 6 to 17 years of age. Of the 19 patients, 12 received progressively higher doses of milk protein, and seven received placebo. At the beginning of the study, the children were able to tolerate on average only 40 mg (.04 ounces or a quarter of a teaspoon) of milk. Yet, at the end of the study (which lasted four months), the children who received the immunotherapy were able to tolerate an average of 5,140mg (over 5 ounces) of milk with no allergic reaction or with mild symptoms (abdominal discomfort, mouth itching, etc.). Those in the placebo group saw no change.

Nonetheless, readers must use caution with this widely-publicized story. I have viewed many articles reporting on this study with misleading titles like, "Milk Allergy? Drink More Milk." Statements such as these may plant the incorrect idea that milk allergies can be "cured" just by consuming milk, but Immunotherapy is a very precise treatment. The allergen dosages begin at very, very small amounts and must be administered by a physician who is closely monitoring the patient for allergic reactions.

The research for this study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and The Eudowood Foundation. The Hopkins group is currently studying the use of oral immunotherapy on egg allergies, and another study on milk immunotherapy is already underway.

### Reference:

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