

Kids' Allergy Shots Cut Health Care Costs

Allergen Immunotherapy Reduces Medications, Doctor Visits, Study Finds

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WebMD Health News

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Jan. 14, 2010 -- Allergy shots are no fun for kids. However, for children with [hay fever](#) (or allergic rhinitis), the shots are likely to reduce medications and doctor visits, according to a new study.

Allergic rhinitis is the third most common chronic disease in American children, with up to 40% of kids affected. If allergic rhinitis is not properly treated, it can impact a child's quality of life and lead to a host of health issues. Allergic rhinitis is responsible for 2 million missed school days each year and \$2.3 million in direct health care expenses for children under age 12.

In the study, published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, researchers compared health care expenses for a group of 2,771 children younger than 18 who received allergy shots, or allergen immunotherapy, with 11,010 children who did not get the shots. Researchers looked at records for a 10-year period beginning in 1997. All the children in the study had newly diagnosed allergic rhinitis. The median health care costs per patient during an 18-month period for the children with the shots was \$3,247, compared to \$4,872 for the non-shot group. Pharmacy costs were \$1,108 for the shot group, compared to \$1,316 for the non-shot group.

The difference in health care costs was evident within three months and lasted throughout the decade-long study period.

“This is great news, not only for families who will experience fewer out-of-pocket expenses for allergy medications, but also for the ever increasing national health care crisis,” study co-author Linda S. Cox, MD, immediate past chair of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology's Immunotherapy Diagnostic Committee, says in a news release. “Because of the serious medical and economic consequences of childhood allergic rhinitis, early diagnosis and aggressive treatment need to be our priority.”