



Low Cost Vet Mobile

718-544-PETS (7387)



Your Pet's Allergies

Itchy skin (pruritis) with recurrent infections can often be due to underlying skin allergies. Two common types of allergies in pets include food allergy and atopy, or seasonal allergy. Both allergies can cause recurrent bacterial and yeast skin infections and can be difficult to distinguish on presentation alone. Below is a brief summary of both allergies. Keep in mind that cats and dogs can and often do have *both* allergies.

Food Allergy

Food allergy derives from an allergy to the protein content of food, specifically beef, chicken, or fish. Less commonly, pets may be allergic to egg, milk, wheat, or preservatives. Food allergies can occur after a pet has been eating the same food for months to years with no previous reaction since it takes time for the body to build a reaction to these proteins. Pets that are allergic to food can have:

- Recurrent bacterial and yeast skin infections with pustules, crusting and redness
- Facial itchiness with rubbing of the face
- Interdigital itchiness with licking of the paws

Occasionally diarrhea and/or vomiting

There is no reliable *blood* test for food allergies and food allergy can only be determined through a 6 to 8 week food trial. A prescription food is used and can consist of hydrolyzed protein (protein that is broken down until it is least reactive to the body) or a novel meat protein (venison, duck, rabbit). Examples include:

- Hills z/d
- Royal Canin novel meat protein diets: duck, venison, etc.

Purina HA diets

When performing a food trial, it is very important that **ONLY** the prescription food is offered for 6 to 8 weeks. This means no dog biscuits, rawhides, table scraps, milk bones, or dairy products. Friends, dog walkers, and doorman must be warned that your pet is on a food trial so that treats are not offered.

Atopy (Seasonal Allergy)

Like food allergies, atopy (seasonal allergies) can develop in pets with no previous history of allergies. Although contact allergies can occur, pets are usually allergic to a variety of air-borne allergens and it is impossible to determine which without additional testing performed by a veterinary dermatologist. Pets with atopy can have:

- Recurrent bacterial and yeast infections

Itchiness that can occur in any part of the body such as the armpits, groin, flanks, and face

Atopy can be managed effectively but generally cannot be cured.



Antihistamines can help to reduce itchiness although are not as effective in cats and dogs as they are in humans. When using antihistamines, try one type per week on a regular basis since, just as in humans, one antihistamine can be more effective than another. Examples include:

- Benadryl (diphenhydramine): may cause drowsiness
- Tavist (clemastine)
- Claritin (loratidine)
- Zyrtec (cetirizine): may cause drowsiness
- Chlorpheniramine

Hydroxyzine (prescription)

Addition of **omega-3 fatty acids** has been shown to reduce the antihistamine and corticosteroid dose needed to control pruritis and can be safely added to your pet's diet.

There are also numerous shampoos and lotions to control infections (Ketochlor shampoo) and to relieve itchiness (oatmeal and hydrocortisone lotions and shampoos)

If your pet requires additional therapy to control itchiness, doses of **corticosteroids** (prednisone) can be used. This medication can cause increased thirst and urination and increased appetite and should be used intermittently at the lowest effective dose.

If your pet suffers from chronic allergies that are not effectively controlled, a consult with a veterinary dermatologist may be beneficial to discuss intradermal skin testing and determine the specific allergies your pet suffers from.