



## What is allergy?

Allergy is a disease in which the immune system reacts abnormally to everyday substances such as pollen, animal danders, mold spores, mites, and certain foods. Offending substances causing allergies are allergens. Inhaling, ingesting or direct contact of the allergen with the pet's skin leads to an allergic reaction. Reactions are unpleasant and some are serious.

## What are the signs of allergies?

The most common clinical sign of allergies in dogs and cats is itchy skin, which can present as:

- Scratching, biting, licking and chewing at the skin
- Excessive face rubbing
- Excessive grooming
- Hair loss
- Recurrent ear infections

The usual locations of the itching are the belly, feet, base of tail, and face, especially around the eyes, mouth, and ears. Less commonly observed signs include sneezing and coughing.

## How do I know if my pet has allergies?

Not all scratching is due to allergies. Diagnosis requires the veterinarian to first eliminate all other possible causes of the itching/infection, which can be:

- Fleas, lice or other parasites
- Bacterial or fungal infections
- Seborrhea
- Thyroid disease
- Dry skin

These problems can be easier to resolve or even cure, unlike allergy. Your veterinarian will want to take a complete history of your pet's problems, perform a physical examination and possibly run some preliminary laboratory tests. A special diet may be recommended to eliminate food allergy as a cause. As other causes of itching are eliminated, your veterinarian may arrive at the diagnosis of allergy.

## How does my pet get allergies?

Your pet inherited its ability to become allergic. After continued exposure to the offending allergens, your pet may produce signs which typically start with a short period of biting, chewing and scratching, which can be mild or unnoticeable. As time goes on, these episodes become more frequent and longer lasting, leading to changes in skin texture and color. Initial signs of allergy typically appear during the first 2 to 4 years of life.

## How are allergies treated?

If the reaction is mild, avoidance of the offending allergens, in conjunction with environmental modifications, may control the disease. Your veterinarian may also prescribe medications such as steroids, antihistamines or a special food. In pets with more severe allergies, specific allergy treatments such as immunotherapy (allergy shots or drops) may be needed. Immunotherapy is often recommended because prolonged use of certain itch reducing medications (especially steroids) may produce serious side effects, potentially decreasing the quality and length of your pet's life. Your veterinarian will outline various alternative treatments based on your needs and the needs of your pet.

Common anti-itch treatments:

- Bathing
- Cyclosporine - Atopica®
- Antihistamines
- Apoquel®
- Prednisone
- Cytopoint®



ALLERCEPT® Immunotherapy Treatment – Shots and Drops