



**Animal
Adoption**



**Veterinary
Center**

718-544-PETS (7387) www.LowCostVet.org



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 a reliable *blood* test for food and environmental allergies done at a specialty laboratory, which tells you exactly which type of food ingredients the animal is high and low allergic to. The report also give you a directory of all the food made which does NOT contain any of those ingredients and where to get such food. Or a hypoallergenic food diet trial can be done. 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.
- Hydrolyzed Protein 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
- 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 newer medicines which are very effective, such as Apoquel. There are also numerous shampoos and lotions to control infections (Ketoconazole 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.

Full Allergy Testing

When all else fails it may be time to find out EXACTLY what is causing the allergy. Types of food items, environmental factors such as mold, dust and the types of plants even, are tested. A specialized veterinary allergy laboratory if sent the animal's blood serum and within 10 days you get a full written report. Which items are high and which are low positive, the name of the pet food manufacturers which manufacture pet food without any of the identified food allergens, their 800 phone numbers and websites, and the name of the food, so the shopping and searching I already did.

In terms of cost for this type of full allergy test, market price is \$600 but we perform it for just \$290. If the elimination of the food and environmental and plant allergens is not sufficient then allergy shots or liquid can be ordered.

ALLERGIES CAN BE CHALLENGING AND IF NOT PUT UNDER CONTROL AND UNTREATED WILL PROGRESS TO PYODERMA (SKIN INFECTION). THIS HAPPENS BECAUSE AS THE ANIMAL ITCHES, THE ITCHING OPENS TINY SCRATCHES IN THEIR SKIN AND THE BACTERIA ON THEIR PAWS AND NAILS ENTER THEIR SKIN. IF THAT HAPPENS YOU WOULD NEED ANTIBIOTIC FOR THE SKIN INFECTION AS WELL, SO IT IS BEST TO ADDRESS SKIN ISSUES EARLY AND FREQUENTLY AS THEY COME UP.