

The No. 1 Sign of Allergies in Pets and What to Do About It

You may sniffle and sneeze with allergies, but that's not typically how your cat or dog shows symptoms. But don't worry - I also tell you the first and subsequent steps to relieve your pet's misery and prevent an ongoing escalating problem ...

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

[Download Transcript](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Unlike humans who sniffle and sneeze, when a pet has allergies, the symptom is usually allergic dermatitis, which is irritated or inflamed skin
- Signs a pet is allergic include very itchy skin; scratching, biting or chewing at the skin; inflamed, tender areas; hotspots; and itchy ears
- The first step in helping an allergic pet is to address potential leaky gut syndrome by transitioning to an anti-inflammatory diet containing few if any grains, and no potatoes. The addition of an omega-3 fatty acid supplement and coconut oil can also be very helpful. In addition, it's important your allergic pet has optimal immune system function
- Foot soaks and body rinses when your pet has been outdoors, along with frequent bathing, can do wonders to help keep allergens off your dog or cat and out of his environment. Keeping your home and pet bedding clean will reduce allergen contamination indoors, as will use of non-toxic cleaners and an air purifier
- There are a number of beneficial supplements for allergic pets, as well as desensitization shots or sublingual drops, and natural treatments like NAET and RESPIT therapy

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published July 01, 2013.

Today I'd like to discuss treating seasonal allergies in your pet. Humans who suffer from seasonal allergies usually have symptoms involving the respiratory tract, like sniffing, sneezing, coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties. But when a dog or cat has allergies, the symptoms more often show up as a condition called allergic dermatitis, which is irritation or inflammation of the skin.

Signs Your Dog or Cat Is Allergic

A pet with allergies is usually very itchy. He'll scratch excessively. He might bite or chew at a certain part of his body or be generally irritated. He may also rub his body against furniture or the carpet as he tries to relieve that miserable itchy feeling.

As the itching and scratching gets worse, often the skin becomes inflamed and tender. There might be areas of hair loss, open sores, or sores that have scabbed over.

If your pet is a dog, he might develop hotspots, which are inflamed, infected areas of skin resulting from overgrowth of normal bacteria. (Although cats do occasionally get hotspots, it's uncommon.)

Hotspots are typically red and angry-looking, and they can develop very quickly. They ooze pus, and often cause bleeding and hair loss.

Pets with seasonal allergies, especially dogs, often also have problems with their ears. The ear canals become itchy and inflamed as part of the generalized allergic response. They can also become infected with yeast and bacteria.

Symptoms of a possible ear infection include scratching at the ears, aggressive headshaking, hair loss around the ears, and a bad smell or discharge from the ears.

Another thing to watch out for, if you suspect your pet may have allergies, is generalized redness, which means your pet can become red anywhere – red puffy eyes, red oral tissue, a red chin, red muzzle, red paws, a red belly or inner thighs, and even a red anus or tail base.

Respiratory symptoms aren't common in dogs and cats with allergies, but they're certainly not unheard of. Much like an allergic human, your dog or cat may have a runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, or coughing. Pets with seasonal allergies to pollens, grasses, ragweed, and molds also tend to develop sensitivity to other inhaled allergens. Animals with a weakness in the lung fields can develop sinusitis and bronchitis just as people do.

Relief for Allergic Pets Begins in the Gut

The first thing I do for a dog or cat with allergies is address the diet and the possibility of leaky gut syndrome. Often dysbiosis, which is also called leaky gut, is the reason seasonal allergies get progressively worse from one year to the next. For more information on this problem, take a look at my video on dysbiosis.

Pets with allergies should be transitioned to an anti-inflammatory diet if they aren't already on one. Diets that create or worsen inflammation are high in carbohydrates.

Your allergic pet's diet should be very low in grain content and absolutely potato-free. If you adhere to Chinese food energetics or Chinese food theory and principles, you will also want to avoid feeding "energetically warm" or hot foods during periods of inflammation in your pet. This means avoiding chicken and beef as protein sources.

Omega-3 fatty acids can decrease inflammation throughout the body. Adding them into the diet of a pet struggling with seasonal allergies can be very beneficial. The best sources of omega-3 are krill oil, salmon oil, tuna oil, anchovy oil, sardine oil, and other fish body oils. Keep in mind that cod liver oil does not provide enough EFAs for pets. It's a really good source of vitamins A and D, but not essential fatty acids.

I also recommend coconut oil for allergic pets because it contains lauric acid, which helps decrease the body's production of yeast. Using **fish body oil with coconut oil** can help moderate or even suppress the inflammatory response.

Additional Steps to Relieve the Suffering of an Allergic Pet

Because allergies are an immune system response, it's important to keep your pet's immune function optimal. This means avoiding unnecessary vaccines and drugs. Pets suffering with allergies should not be vaccinated during a flare-up. Vaccines stimulate the immune system, which is the last thing an allergic pet needs. I recommend, instead, talking to your holistic vet about titers to measure your pet's immunity to core diseases as an alternative to automatically vaccinating.

Pets that go outside regularly are basically furry vacuums. They're collecting millions of allergens each time they run around outside.

Irrigation therapy, which is a fancy phrase for rinsing your pet off, can provide immediate relief for itchy, irritated skin. Frequent baths also wash away allergens on the coat and skin. It's very important that you use a grain-free shampoo. Oatmeal shampoos, which contain grain, are a bad idea for allergic pets.

Foot soaks are also a great way to reduce the amount of allergens your pet tracks into the house and spreads all over her indoor environment. If your pet is prone to licking and chewing her feet, this is a great way to reduce the potential for infected nail beds, interdigital cysts, and inflamed, swollen pads.

I've had dozens of clients in my practice set up a foot soak outside their back door and do a quick parade through the soothing, disinfecting wash before their pet comes in from outside. And believe it or not, this simple trick has kept many of my seasonal allergy patients off medications the entire summer.

Eye rinses specifically for pets can provide relief for itchy eyes. But it's very important that you never use a human medicated eye drop without your vet's consent. There is a great over the counter all-natural eye rinse by Halo Pets that can reduce eye irritation. I recommend that in place of any type of drug or human eye drop.

It's also important to keep the areas of your home where your pet spends most of her time as allergen-free as possible. Vacuuming and cleaning floors as well as pet bedding will help reduce the amount of allergens in the environment. Using non-toxic cleaning agents rather than household cleaners that contain chemicals is also beneficial.

Investing in an air purifier to remove allergens inside the house is a great idea for allergic pets. Covering your pet beds with dust mite covers that can be frequently washed can also help reduce allergen contamination that your pet may be bringing in from the outside.

Beneficial Supplements for Allergic Pets

There are supplements I routinely prescribe for pets with seasonal allergic issues, starting with quercetin, which is a bioflavonoid with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and other wonderful properties. In fact, I call it "nature's Benadryl," because it's very effective at suppressing histamine release. Histamine is what causes the inflammation, redness, and irritation associated with an allergic response.

Bromelain and papain are proteolytic enzymes that increase absorption of quercetin, making it more effective. I like to combine quercetin, bromelain, and papain together because they have a great synergistic effect. They also suppress prostaglandin release, which in turn decreases the pain and inflammation of irritated mucus membranes and other areas of the body.

I also frequently recommend a product called HistoPlex-AB by Biotics Research. This is a blend of standardized herbal extracts with immunomodulating effects. I also use a lot of Moducare by Thorne Research to help modulate overactive immune systems.

Eucalyptus oil can be healing to mucus membranes. And diffusing the oil around allergic dogs has proven beneficial in many instances.

I also sell locally produced honey at my clinic. Local honey contains small amounts of pollen from the local area that can help desensitize the body to local allergens. The honey I sell has been proven to be really effective at decreasing seasonal allergic responses in dogs and cats living in the Chicago area. The best place to pick up local honey is from a farmers' market in your area.

More Help

Pets can also receive desensitization injections (allergy shots) like allergic humans do. But many pet owners opt for oral drops instead. Studies show that sublingual drops, which are the under-the-tongue variety, can be just as effective as the injections. I use a sublingual product derived from local allergens called **RESPIT** therapy (regionally-specific immunotherapy), which my clients really like.

If you're lucky enough to live near an **NAET** practitioner (NAET = Nambudripad's Allergy Elimination Techniques), he or she can also offer a non-toxic means of allergy elimination.

The more your pet is exposed to the allergens she is sensitive to, the more intense and long-lasting her allergic response will become. With my regular patients (those who started out life as my patient), I certainly recommend addressing potential root causes at the first sign of any type of allergic response, which usually occurs around six to 12 months of age. I address symptoms immediately. I do this because I want to identify and reduce the risk of an escalating response from one year to the next.

Whether your pet is young or an adult, I hope this video has given you some potentially helpful recommendations as you look for ways to relieve the suffering of your allergic dog or cat.
