

How to Treat Dog Acne and Prevent Skin Breakouts

Like people, dogs can develop pimples for different reasons. While it's not a serious problem, it can lead to discomfort. Here's how to help your pup's skin heal and prevent breakouts in the future.

Reviewed by [Dr. Arielle Walton](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dogs can develop acne, often appearing as red bumps, blackheads or whiteheads around the chin and mouth, usually due to clogged hair follicles and excess oil production
- Common causes of dog acne include genetics, hormonal changes, trauma, friction from rough surfaces, ill-fitting collars, and underlying skin conditions like allergies or sensitivities
- Certain breeds, such as Boxers, Bulldogs, and Weimaraners, are more prone to acne due to their skin folds, short coats, or abnormal hair follicles, increasing the risk of clogged pores
- Treating dog acne involves gentle cleaning with pet-safe cleansers, switching to stainless steel or ceramic bowls, and consulting a vet for persistent or severe breakouts
- Preventing breakouts requires regular hygiene, avoiding irritants and monitoring skin changes, ensuring your dog's comfort and overall health while reducing the risk of infections

Have you ever seen small growths — tiny red bumps, blackheads or even whiteheads — on your dog's face, particularly on their chin or around their mouth? Don't panic — it's possibly just acne. Believe it or not, dogs can also develop acne during puberty. But unlike humans, they usually don't care what blemishes appear on their skin.

Still, canine acne can cause discomfort in some pups, so you must address this skin issue as pet parents. If your dog is experiencing frequent breakouts, you should know a few things. Learning about the causes of dog acne, the best ways to treat it, and the steps you can take to prevent it will help you keep your furry friend happy and healthy.

What Is Dog Acne and Why Does It Form?

Like humans, a dog's skin has follicles with sebaceous glands that create and release a natural oil (sebum). This oil works by lubricating and safeguarding their skin, preventing it from drying. However, there are instances when the follicles become clogged — as a result, the sebum cannot be released from the follicles, and instead fills up in the gland, forming pimples.¹

When clogged, the follicles can become red, swollen, and sometimes filled with pus. If left untreated, these bumps can become painful and infected, irritating your dog's skin.

Acne in dogs typically appears on the chin, lips, and around the mouth. While it might look similar to a rash, dog acne is different because it is persistent and can worsen if not treated properly. You might notice red bumps or even crusty sores in the affected areas. Some dogs scratch or rub their faces more when they have acne, which can lead to further irritation and infection.

While oil blockage is the primary cause of dog acne, certain factors can increase your pet's risk of developing it, such as:²

- **Genetics** — Some dogs are predisposed to acne compared to others.
- **Hormones** — Hormonal changes can cause the skin to overproduce oil.
- **Trauma** — Hair may break around the skin's surface, leading to trauma, inflammation, and even rupture of the hair follicles.
- **Friction** — If your dog rubs their face against carpets, hard surfaces, or rough bedding, it can cause more abrasions that allow bacteria to enter.
- **Improperly fitting collars and harnesses** — Collars or harnesses that rub against their skin and cause irritation.
- **Underlying skin conditions** — Allergies and other potential skin ailments can contribute to the development of canine acne.

Which Dogs and Breeds Are Predisposed to Canine Acne?

Like humans, dog pimples also develop during puberty — when they're 5 to 8 months old. The good news is that these skin growths tend to disappear on their own. In most cases, the acne clears up by the time they turn 1 year old (meaning they've officially reached adulthood).³

Some breeds are more prone to acne than others. Dogs with short coats and wrinkled skin, like Boxers, Bulldogs, Weimaraners, Great Danes, Rottweilers and Dobermans, tend to experience acne more frequently.⁴ The folds and wrinkles in their skin can trap dirt and bacteria, leading to more clogged pores.

Hairless dog breeds like the Mexican Hairless and Chinese Crested that develop acne more frequently because they have abnormal hair follicles.⁵ Some dogs have more sensitive skin, which makes them more likely to develop acne, especially if their faces are regularly exposed to rough surfaces.

If your dog continues to develop acne into adulthood, an underlying health issue needs attention. Keep an eye on your dog's skin and note any changes; this can help you figure out the best way to manage the problem.

How to Treat Dog Acne

You might feel tempted to pop the pimples or scrub the area aggressively, but doing so can make things worse.⁶ The best way to treat mild acne is by gently cleaning the affected area with a mild, pet-safe, all-natural cleanser. You can use warm water and a soft cloth to wipe away dirt and bacteria.

You can also apply a warm compress on areas that are inflamed. Dip a clean cloth into the water (make sure it isn't too hot), then place it over the area for 15 seconds. Repeat as needed.⁷

Keeping your dog's face clean and reducing exposure to irritants can lower the chances of breakouts. Wipe the area around their mouth with a clean cloth, especially after every mealtime.

Changing your dog's things, such as replacing plastic food and water bowls with stainless steel or ceramic, can help prevent dog acne. Plastic bowls can develop tiny scratches that trap bacteria.⁸

For more stubborn acne, you may need to see a vet. They can prescribe medicated shampoos or topical treatments if an infection has developed.⁹ Watch for swelling, bleeding or sores that don't seem to heal, and get professional advice immediately. Your vet can determine whether your dog's acne is a skin issue or if an underlying problem exists.

Taking care of your dog's skin is just as important as keeping the rest of their body healthy. With proper care and a little attention to hygiene, you can help your dog avoid painful breakouts and enjoy a happy, comfortable life.

Sources and References

^{1,2,3} [Purina, February 27, 2025](#)

^{4,6} [VCA Animal Hospitals, Acne in Dogs](#)

^{5,7,8,9} [Loveland Regional Animal Hospital, Pimples on Dogs: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment](#)
