

Allergies are most often a seasonal problem, from dozens of different pollens or dusts that we either breathe in or come into contact with. These allergens come and go from day to day, week to week and season to season. Local weather forecasters often include a "Pollen Index" as a warning to allergy sufferers. North Carolina is a prime area for allergies.

What are the symptoms of allergies? Many pet owners are surprised to discover that pets are allergic to the exact same things that people are. So why do pets scratch, bite, lick, and chew while people suffer from sinus congestion and runny eyes? A key factor is the location in our bodies where "reactive cells" reside. With people, the majority of these reactive cells (such as 'mast cells') are mainly found in the upper air passages and sinus areas of the face. That's why people sneeze and get sinus congestion, runny noses, runny eyes. In dogs and cats, the reactive cells are mostly in the skin. That's why pets bite, scratch, chew, lick, rub, etc. Another important difference between pets and people is that allergies in people are driven by a "histamine pathway". That's why we can take anti-histamines to (hopefully) reduce the effects of allergies. In pets, however, allergies are driven by a "cytokine pathway" not histamine which is why anti-histamines (such as Benadryl) are seldom of any benefit for pets.

Can Allergies Be Cured? Our Goal at CVPC is to control and manage the allergies and find relief from the symptoms.

Seasonal Allergies Plant Pollens are responsible for Seasonal Allergies in both Pets and People

Spring is a time for allergies to **Pollens from Trees** (March through May).

Summer is a time for allergies to **Pollens from Grass** (May through August).

Autumn is a time for allergies to **Pollens from Weeds** (September through December), and **fleas** are at their peak in NC.

Environmental (Indoor) Allergies

When biting, scratching, licking occur **year-round**, we always have to consider 2 possibilities: Environmental (Indoor) allergies, Food Allergies or both. Environmental Allergies result mostly from **house dust, dust mites and molds and mildews**. There are many other allergens that can be potential year-round problems: **cigarette smoke, feathered pillows, comforters, wool fabrics.**

Many pets suffer from a combination of seasonal, environmental , and food allergies.

Mild Allergy (Mild itchiness... no loss of hair ... mild skin irritation)

- 1. Frequent "Wash Cloth Wipe Down":** Every time your pet goes outdoors and comes back inside, take a **washcloth with cool water ONLY (do NOT use baby wipes or pet wipes !)** and give a full-body wipe-down, focusing attention on the feet (tops and bottoms), legs, chest and belly, the hind end, and the face, nose and neck. We're wiping off the pollens that get onto the fur, then work their way to the skin, and migrate into the body where they will trigger the effects of allergies. Otherwise, your pet will bring the pollens indoors with them. Our pets lay down on their bed or on the furniture, and the pollens will continue to pile up every time they go outdoors. It is important to **wipe down ALL pets** that go outside to keep as much pollen outside as possible.
- 2. Omega-3 Fatty Acids / Fish Oils:** Every itchy pet should get extra Omega-3's in fish oils! Fatty acids can greatly enhance the 'epidermal barrier', the protective layer of the skin. The better the barrier, the better the skin can repel pollens and dusts and prevent moisture loss in the skin. Fatty acids have an anti-inflammatory benefit to reduce skin irritation, but do not help much with itching.

The most important factor when dosing Fish Oils is the amount of **EPA + DHA** ... not just the total quantity of Fish Oil.

For best benefit, pets need **30 to 35 mg per pound of body weight of combined EPA + DHA daily.**

For the correct dose, add the EPA + DHA listed on the label.

Example: A container listing 180 mg EPA + 120 mg DHA on the label = 300 mg TOTAL.

This 300 mg would be the correct dose for a 10 pound dog. A 20 lb dog should get combined EPA + DHA of 600 mg to 700 mg each day. A 50 lb dog should get a combined 1500 mg to 1750 mg per day, and so on.

Moderate to Severe Allergy

(Very itchy pet, possible hair loss, red and irritated skin, often with a bacterial or yeast infection of the skin)

- 1. Antimicrobial Therapy:** Bacterial infections and/or yeast infections of the skin are commonly seen in allergic dogs and can make the itching more intense than the actual source of the allergy. Yeast infections, in particular, can be extremely itchy and irritating, resulting in a rancid odor to the skin. Many of these pets need oral **antibiotics** (for bacterial infection) and/or oral **anti-fungals** (for yeast infections) medication. We often recommend **Douxo PYO Shampoo**, topical **Douxo PYO Mousse**, and / or **Douxo Chlorhexidine Spray** to help eliminate bacterial and yeast infections.
- 2. CBD + CBDA:** The newest tool that we have for managing your dog's allergies is CBD + CBDA. Many dogs will not benefit from CBD but will only benefit from CBDA. **ElleVet is the only CBD+CBDA product that exists for pets.** Recent research has proven that **ElleVet** can be extremely helpful to control your dog or cat's intense itching, chewing, licking, etc. ElleVet is also a Full-Spectrum CBD product, which is essential to its potential benefit.

3. **Prescription Diet:** Hill's Derm Complete or Royal Canin Skin Support Dog foods have been formulated to help protect the skin from the exposure of pollens / environmental allergens. Many customers tell us they've had good results with their dog's seasonal allergies. These foods are not a cure, but they can be very beneficial. Additionally, Hill's Derm Complete diet can be helpful for dogs with **food allergies**. Order these foods and have them shipped directly to your home via our website: www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com. Go to "Food Delivery" at the top of the homepage
4. **COOL Water Bath + Towel Dry (No hot-air blow dryer) + Bathe Often!**
If your dog is intensely itchy, a COOL WATER Bath + COOL WATER Rinse + Towel Dry (do not use a heated blow dryer!) should **provide relief for about 1 day**. Water soothes the itch, re-hydrates the outer skin layers, and washes away allergens and pollens that can be absorbed through the skin.
5. **Oatmeal shampoos (for Dogs!)** can be very helpful for **short-term (~24 hrs) relief** of itchy pets. I encourage frequent bathing of dogs in need of relief. When you bathe with our shampoos, you are moisturizing the skin not drying it out! For best results, use the appropriate shampoo for a particular skin condition. For itchy dogs, a bath can provide short-term, but very beneficial relief. My go-to shampoo is our **Aloe & Oatmeal Shampoo** (available online and at our events). The Aloe provides additional moisturizing while the Oatmeal helps with itchy relief. For dogs with bacterial and / or yeast infections, our topical **Douxo PYO Mousse** or medicated sprays can make a world of difference.

Reminder #1 - Do NOT bathe your itchy pet in warm/hot water as it will often intensify the itchiness! Think COOL!

Reminder #2 - Leave medicated shampoos on the skin for at least 10 to 15 minutes for best benefit.

Medicated shampoos do not lather as much, so avoid wasting more than you need.

Reminder #3 - Please do not use people shampoos for pets and especially **do NOT use Dawn!** It's for your dishes

Reminder #4 - If you cannot bathe your pet, use our **Douxo CALM Spray** at least every other day.

6. **Flea Control:** Some of the itchiest dogs we see are from allergic reactions to flea bites. If your pets have fleas, you **MUST** get rid of them. All pets need to be treated for fleas, not just the itchy ones. We carry the *best* flea products. Do NOT waste your money on the flea control junk you buy at pet stores and the big box retail stores or online.

Non-Cortisone / Non-Steroid Medications to Manage Allergies

Apoquel (Oclacitinib): This prescription tablet has proven to be very effective in controlling itching in 80% of dogs. It is popular since it works well, and there are few side effects. Initially, we give it twice a day for 10-14 days. Then give it once a day as needed. It does *not* have the potentially harmful effects on the body's adrenal glands like steroids do. It's not approved for use in cats.

Cytopoint: Cytopoint is an injection that mimics the body's natural immune (defense) system. Given during the 'itchy season' for allergic dogs, 80% of dogs get significant relief from the itching within 3 days. Most dogs will get continued relief for 4 to 8 weeks. Some dogs see the most benefit after the second Cytopoint injection. It is not a steroid, and side-effects are very rare. It is not approved for cats.

Cortisone / Corticosteroids to Manage Allergies

In many situations, it is extremely helpful to use corticosteroids (cortisone) to temporarily relieve your pet's discomfort. While we get excellent results from cortisone, the side-effects make it undesirable for long-term use. In the short-run, we see an increase in thirst and urination, increase in appetite, increased panting and sometimes pets appear more anxious or agitated. But nearly every pet received tremendous relief from the misery of itching, chewing, biting, etc.

Immunotherapy (\$800-\$1500 estimate in the first year)

Allergen-Specific ImmunoTherapy (ASIT) based on intradermal skin testing or blood/serum testing, can be a safe and effective way to control itching due to allergies. It requires skin and/or blood tests, and it's more expensive than other forms of treatment (\$800++) and it may take weeks to months before results may be seen once treatment is started. But **it is possible to significantly alleviate the allergies of some dogs** that are severely itching and chewing. Typically, each dog is tested for 60-80 different items. Among the items are **local grasses, weeds, ragweed, pollens from trees and shrubs, flowers, molds and mildews, house dust, epidermals (cat skin, dog skin, etc), miscellaneous items (tobacco, kapok, cotton, wool, etc), feathers, house dusts, and fleas.**

Immunotherapy can begin once it has been determined what a pet is allergic to. The idea is to "de-sensitize" the pet to whatever it is they're allergic to through injections, or drops (in the mouth) or a spray (in the mouth) regularly for the desensitization process. Some pets may need to continue treatment for life.

Antihistamines (Benadryl and Zyrtec): Anti-histamines **do not typically work well for dogs but, they are safe!** They may provide temporary relief if the itching is mild and there is no infection present. Just as with people, we don't know which one will work. **If you try one and it doesn't work after 5 to 7 days, it isn't going to work, and you may need to try prescription options.** Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) can make dogs drowsy.

Benadryl dose: 1 mg per pound of dog's weight 2 to 3 times daily (Ex. A 25 lb dog gets 25mg 2 or 3 times daily).

Zyrtec dose: 0.5mg per lb -once per day wt _____ x 0.5= _____mg

For mildly irritated, runny eyes, you can try Alaway or Pataday eye drops, available over the counter.
Carolina Value Pet Care