

Atopy

Atopy or environmental allergies are quite common in dogs and cats. Environmental irritants may include pollens, molds, house dust mites, and even human dander. Some pets may have an allergic flare-up for only short periods in the spring and fall, while others show symptoms all year long.

Typical allergic signs in pets are scratching, face rubbing, obsessive licking of the feet, ear inflammation and infections, skin rash, pigmentation change and patchy hair loss. Allergies can also allow the skin and ears to become infected with bacteria or yeast. These secondary infections will then increase the overall “itch” level of the skin.

Unfortunately we cannot usually permanently “cure” allergies, but we can control and treat the symptoms. Pets with a short allergy season can be treated with low doses of steroids, fatty acids, antihistamines, frequent bathing, and wipe downs to remove pollens from the skin. This may be all that’s needed to keep your pet comfortable. Often times an antibiotic or anti-fungal agent will be added to combat a concurrent infection. Apoquel, Cytopoint, and Atopica (cyclosporine) are all non-steroidal options that can significantly ease your pet’s discomfort. These medications have been proven to be highly effective when used along with immunotherapy.

Pets who are seasonally allergic for longer periods may need intradermal allergy testing and immunotherapy or desensitization. This is the injection of allergens underneath the skin administered at home. Desensitization stimulates the T-lymphocyte suppressor cells, blocking the immune system, which is hyperactive in an allergic patient. Immunotherapy is highly effective in seventy five percent of treated pets. Fifty percent of these pets respond to treatment in 3 to 6 months and twenty five percent of pets respond within 12 months. Most pets will need lifelong booster injections to continue immunotherapy. To begin immunotherapy, your pet must first be allergy tested. Testing is done by injecting different allergens common in your area under the skin and evaluating the reaction.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any other questions about your pet’s allergies or the treatments we can offer.

Allergy Discharge Injectable

Post Intradermal Allergy Testing Instructions

- Due to the sedation, give only small amounts of water when arriving home and a light meal later in the evening.
- Topical steroids can be applied to the test patch if the area becomes irritated. We can prescribe or suggest an appropriate medication. A t-shirt may be helpful if your pet is severely itchy. Use sunscreen if the pet is a sunbather. The hair on the test patch area should grow back in 2-4 months.

Injectable Allergen Instructions

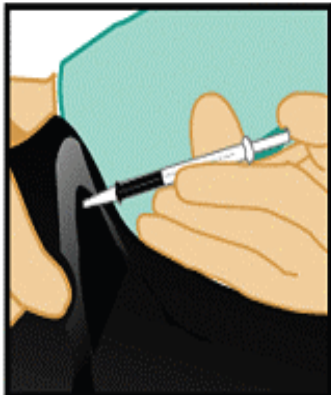
- Keep the allergen vial refrigerated. Do not freeze.
- Gently roll the allergen vial to mix the allergen prior to injection.
- Cleanse the rubber top of the vial with alcohol before drawing up an injection to prevent any bacterial contamination. Use a new needle and syringe each time.
- You will start with a small amount of allergen serum and increase over time, according to induction schedule.
- After drawing up the injection, allow it to warm to room temperature before administering. This may be more comfortable for your pet.
- Please do not give the allergen injection on a day that your pet is more active or if your pet is not feeling well. Skip the injection for a week following vaccines.
- Monitor your pet for 1-2 hours after the injection. We suggest giving the injection during your veterinarian's normal hours in case of a rare reaction. Allergic reactions to watch for include: facial swelling, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, hives, or increased itching. These kinds of reactions occur in less than 1% of pets. If you have an emergency situation, please contact your veterinarian or emergency veterinarian's office. Please inform us of any adverse reactions.
- Make your pet's injection a positive experience. You can offer treats, praise, or play time after the injection.
- If any pattern of itching occurs in relation to the injections, please call our office.
- Please schedule a recheck examination 6-8 weeks after skin testing, and at the end of the first allergen vial.

A large number of pets will improve with immunotherapy; however the response is not immediate and every pet responds differently. We generally see a response within 2-18 months and most pets will continue to improve with time. Many pets will improve to the point of only requiring immunotherapy and others may need a low dose of steroids, Atopica (Cyclosporine modified), Apoquel, or Cytopoint. These medications do not interfere with the immunotherapy.

Subcutaneous Injections (under the skin):



gather skin



insert injection

1. Clean the surface of medication bottle with an alcohol coated cotton ball.
2. Insert the needle and syringe into the rubber top of the medication.
3. Invert the bottle and draw up the prescribed amount of medication.
4. Make sure there are no air bubbles in the syringe.
5. Using the skin between the shoulder blades tends to be the easiest way to give subcutaneous injectable medications. The skin is not required to be cleaned with alcohol prior to administering the injection.
6. Hold the syringe with the needle exposed in one hand.
7. With the other hand, gently “pinch & lift” a small piece of skin between the shoulder blades, at the base of the neck.
8. By lifting the skin, an upside down “V” shape will be formed by the “tent” in the skin. Insert the needle into the center of this inverted “V” or tented area of skin.
9. Once the needle is inserted into the skin, draw back slightly on the syringe plunger and make sure no blood flows into the syringe. If blood is seen in the syringe, remove the needle and insert it in a different spot.
10. If no blood is seen in the syringe, slowly but steadily push the plunger into the syringe in order to administer the medication.
11. Let go of the skin and make sure there is no liquid on the surface of the skin. If there is moisture on the skin, you may have inserted the needle through the skin and out the other side of the tented skin. If this occurs, contact your veterinarian before another attempt is made.
12. Be sure to log the injection in your personal records for your pet. This will be very helpful if your veterinarian needs to make a diagnosis in the future.

The following are commonly asked questions about your pet's allergy extracts or allergens

The extract arrived in the mail warm, is it ok to use?

If the extract was mailed, it will arrive warm but should be stored in the refrigerator once it is received. The extract is fine if left out at room temperature for short periods, just refrigerate as soon as possible. Overall, the contents or proteins are stable, but lose potency over time if not refrigerated.

There's something floating in the allergen, should I throw it out?

Often times the extract is cloudy or particulates may be seen in the vial. This is normal and the extract is fine to use. The vial may be gently inverted to mix before administered the allergen.

The extract is not the same color as it was last time, are you sure it's the right prescription?

Pollens are harvested at different times, so it's not uncommon for the color to vary. We make, label and package one allergen at a time, so even though it may appear a little different, it is your pet's allergen.

My pet developed a bump where I gave the injection, did I do something wrong?

Sometimes the extract can go in between the top layers of skin instead of underneath it. As long as the bump isn't painful there should not be a reason for concern. When the next dose is administered, be sure to insert the needle all the way under the skin. If swelling occurs after each injection please notify our office.

My pet won't let me give him an injection, what now?

We can try a different needle size; some pets do better with a smaller or larger needle.

Let the allergen come to room temperature in the syringe before giving the injections.

Give your pet a special treat; one he will only get at the time of the injection. Hopefully the injection will then be associated with something pleasant. If needed, our office can administer your pet's injection. Please discuss this with a staff member for further details.

My pet is still itchy, does that mean it's not working?

Call us! Your pet is unique, so we may need to change the injection protocol or adjust medications. The allergy extract should be refilled when the vial is empty; some pets can take up to 18 months to show the results we are looking for. Recheck appointments give us the opportunity to evaluate your pet's progress and needs.