

How to Repair Your Cat's Skin & Coat Damage

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A BEAUTIFUL COAT: how we can help

The skin is the largest and one of the most important organs of the body. It forms a barrier to help protect your cat's body from infections, parasites, and the elements. It also helps to maintain the body's internal environment, preventing loss of moisture.



Your cat's skin and coat tell a vivid story about her overall health and well-being. Her skin is the largest and one of the most important organs of her body. It forms a barrier to protect her body from infections, parasites, and the elements. It also maintains her body's internal environment, preventing loss of moisture and other body constituents. Because skin is an external organ, it is exposed to outside elements and susceptible to injury and disease. On the other hand, skin's external location helps you and your veterinarian detect visible changes and problems easily.

The skin is made up of layers of cells, oil (sebaceous) glands, blood vessels, nerve endings, and hair follicles (which produce hairs). The skin cells form layers, namely the tough outer covering called the epidermis and the deeper layer called the dermis.

The epidermis is composed of older cells that form a tough, protective outer barrier. As the outer cells erode, other cells mature and move up to replace them. The epidermis varies in thickness. The epidermis is thicker in more exposed areas of a cat, such as the head and back, than it is under the forearms and belly.

How skin gets damaged

Veterinarians see a cat more often for skin disorders than those of any other organ. Skin can be damaged in a variety of ways, including bite wounds, abrasions, tearing, infections, and allergies. When skin is damaged, a process called inflammation takes place. Inflammation is a condition in which tissue reacts to injury and undergoes changes during the healing process. When skin is inflamed, it may be red, hot, swollen, or painful.



External parasites, such as fleas, can cause inflammation.

Inflammation can be caused by:

- Primary infection (with bacteria or fungi)
- External parasites (such as fleas or mites)
- Allergic reaction (to substances like ragweed, pollen, dust mites)

Secondary infection

Immune-mediated diseases

Damage to skin can also cause hair loss. When you notice your cat is losing excessive amounts of hair outside of the shedding season, it is a good indication that something is wrong. See your veterinarian.

Taking care of skin

Cats care for their skin by self-grooming. A cat's rough tongue does several good things for her skin:

Sloughs off dead skin

Removes debris

Removes surface parasites

Also, a cat will roll or rub up against things to

Massage her skin

Remove dirt

Activate oil-producing glands in the skin

Scent mark her environment

What you can do

A cat cannot always do enough to take care of her skin, so we have to help. Some actions you can take to help your cat's skin include:

Bathing may help your cat by washing away excess dead skin.

Always use a product made specifically for cats, such as [Advanced Formula Oatmeal Shampoo & Conditioner](#).

[Brushing](#) distributes oil through the hair, may help loosen dead skin, remove hair, and prevent matting.

Haircoat is part of the skin

The deeper layer of skin, called the dermis, contains your cat's hair follicles. Haircoat is different for every breed. Factors such as hormones, nutrition, average outdoor temperature, and day length may also influence coat development. The haircoat functions as insulation and protection. Each hair grows from a simple opening within the skin called a hair follicle. A kitten is born with all of the hair follicles it will ever possess. Any future differences or changes of the hair coat will be due to changes within the follicle. Each hair shaft produced by a hair follicle will eventually die and is removed (shed) and replaced by a new hair shaft produced by that hair follicle. Breeds and individual animals within every breed will shed and regrow hair at varying rates.

We Recommend Nutritional supplements help build healthy skin from the inside out.



- Essential fatty acids, such as in [Vitacaps](#)[®], support healthy skin.
- A nutritious diet, including high-quality protein and balanced minerals, is a must for giving skin a sound foundation. **Drs. Foster & Smith Signature Series**[®]

Flea control is imperative for preventing problems associated with fleas. Some products also help control other external parasites. We recommend [monthly topical flea preventives](#), such as [Bio Spot® ACTIVE CARE SPOT ON® for Cats](#).

Clipping nails helps prevent scratches that could cause damage to the skin and perhaps become infected. See our easy-to-use [nail trimmers](#).

Stop the itch of skin irritations with a [hydrocortisone solution](#), so your pet does not do further damage to the skin by scratching.

Taking care of your cat's skin in the short term may save you money and hassle for the long term. Your cat will also appreciate the attention you give when you're helping her take care of her skin.

contains the nutrition your cat needs to build healthy skin and haircoat.

- Foods and vitamin supplements containing antioxidants, such as **Vitamins C** and **E**, may help provide cells with what they need to function well.