

## Allergy Signs & Symptoms

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Toby, a Springer Spaniel, was always licking and chewing at his feet. His owner, Lin, didn't know what to do about it, but she knew it was driving her 3-year-old dog crazy (not to mention turning Toby's snow-white feet dark burgundy). Lin decided to take her suffering spaniel to her veterinarian for some answers.

Lin had guessed Toby chewed at his feet because they itched so much. Was Toby having a reaction to something he stepped in? Did he have bug bites? What Lin didn't know until she saw her veterinarian was that itchy feet is actually a classic symptom her pet is suffering from an allergy to pollen.

Like Lin, many animal lovers don't know the signs of pet allergies because dogs and cats show different reactions to some of the same things we're allergic to. Grass pollen, for example, made Lin sneeze and her eyes water. That same pollen, it turns out, made her spaniel's feet itch.

Depending on the type of allergy, your pet may exhibit different symptoms. Although pets occasionally exhibit watery eyes and some sneezing, the most common reaction is scratching. Constant scratching may lead to raised infected welts, open sores, and loss of hair. Ear infections are also common in dogs with allergies.

Pets who are affected by allergies may suffer their entire lives; typically symptoms worsen as they get older. We can help alleviate some of that suffering by knowing the signs of allergies and finding the right type of product relief for the symptoms.

### Types of Allergies That Affect Pets

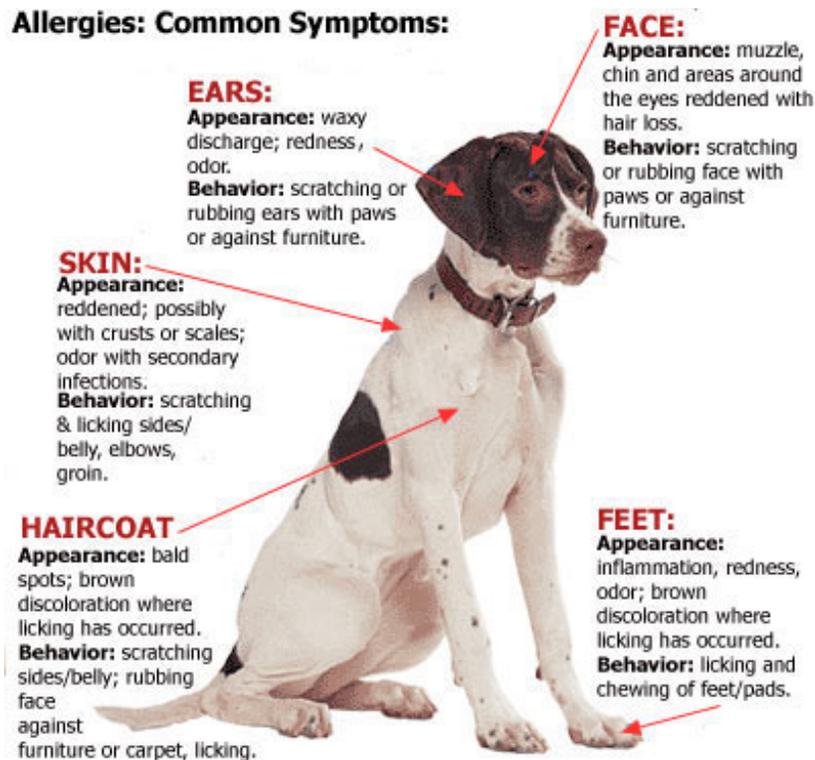
There are many types of allergies that can affect your pet. Environmental allergens that are inhaled or come into contact with the skin can cause allergies known as **atopy**. Common sources are pollens, molds, and dust mites. Allergies that result from flea-bites are referred to as **flea allergy dermatitis**. Certain allergies occur from items

your pet ingests, and are typically called **food allergies**. **Contact allergies** are caused by something your pet comes in direct contact with, such as carpet fibers, plastics, and other things. Contact allergies are less common than atopy and flea allergy dermatitis in pets.

## Atopy

Atopy is the most common form of allergy in dogs and cats. Atopy is often seasonal. If a pet is allergic to ragweed, symptoms occur in the fall. Pets who are allergic to spring tree pollen will show signs in April and May. If a pet is allergic to dust mites, the symptoms may be most dramatic in the winter, when more time is spent inside. Signs of atopy include:

- Chewing at the feet
- Constant licking of the flank (side) and groin area
- Rubbing of the face
- Inflamed ears or recurrent ear infections
- Recurrent hot spots in dogs and pinpoint facial scabbing in cats
- Asthma-like wheezing and respiratory problems (more likely in cats)



## Contact Dermatitis

Less common allergies include contact dermatitis, which include allergies to carpets, cleaners, or plastic. These allergies may cause:

- Red itchy bumps or blisters on sparsely-haired areas of the skin and those exposed to the allergen such as the belly, feet, or muzzle

- Intense scratching
- Hair loss (in chronic conditions)

## Food Allergies

Food allergies account for about 10-15% of all allergies in dogs and cats. Food allergies may show up concurrently with allergies to pollen, dust, etc. Symptoms include:

- Itching, especially face, feet, trunk, limbs and anal area
- Ear problems, often yeast-related
- Skin infections that respond to antibiotics, but then recur as soon as the antibiotic therapy ceases

Occasionally, dogs with true food allergies may have increased bowel movements and soft stool. Food allergies should not be confused with food intolerances, which are not true allergies, and generally cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Watching your pet go through the misery of allergy symptoms can be miserable in itself. If you suspect your pet has allergies, visit your veterinarian. The type of allergy and severity of the symptoms will determine how your veterinarian decides to treat them.

### Less common, but more severe allergic reactions include:

- Urticaria (hives)
- Angioedema (facial swelling)
- Anaphylaxis is a rare, life-threatening, immediate allergic reaction to something ingested or injected. If untreated, it can in some cases, result in shock, respiratory and cardiac failure, and death.

These symptoms usually appear within 20 minutes of being exposed to the allergen, which can include drugs, chemicals, insect bites, or something eaten.

If your pet has a history of a severe allergic reaction, you may want to discuss various options with your veterinarian. Your veterinarian may give you a [prescription](#) for an epi-pen which is a special syringe and needle filled with a single dose of epinephrine. If your pet has an anaphylactic reaction or severe angioedema, inject the epinephrine using the epi-pen and seek emergency veterinary assistance immediately. Be sure to take the epi-pen with you on any trips or hikes.