PET OWNER ALLERGY GUIDE

A simple guide to signs, diagnosis, and everyday allergy care

WHAT ARE PET ALLERGIES?

An allergy happens when a pet's immune system reacts to a substance that is usually harmless. Allergens may be breathed in, eaten, or—most often—contact the skin. Allergies may be inherited or develop after repeated exposure.

Common types of allergies

- **Environmental allergies (atopy):** pollen, dust mites, moulds, and animal dander. Signs may be seasonal or present all year.
- **Food allergy:** a reaction to ingredients in food. Symptoms often occur year-round and may include skin, ear, or digestive problems.
- **Flea allergy:** a reaction to proteins in flea saliva.
- **Contact or medication reactions:** less common reactions to certain materials or medicines.

COMMON SIGNS

- Itching, scratching, biting, or chewing at the skin.
- Licking or chewing paws; brown staining where pets lick.
- Red, sore, flaky, crusty, or smelly skin; hair loss.
- Head rubbing, face rubbing, or recurrent ear infections.
- Watery eyes, sneezing, or—sometimes—digestive signs such as vomiting or diarrhea.

Where signs often appear: paws, face, ears, belly, armpits, groin, and the base of the tail. Similar signs can have other causes, so itching alone does not confirm an allergy.

HOW ALLERGIES ARE DIAGNOSED

- Your veterinarian first checks for other causes, including fleas, mites, bacterial infections, and yeast or fungal infections.
- If food allergy is possible, your vet may recommend a strict food elimination trial.
- Environmental allergy tests may help identify triggers after allergy is suspected or diagnosed. Blood and skin tests are used for environmental allergens; they do not diagnose food allergy.
- Hair and saliva tests are not considered reliable for diagnosing allergies.

Keep track of when symptoms start, where your pet itches, seasonal patterns, foods and treats eaten, and any ear or skin flare-ups. This history can help your veterinarian.

EVERYDAY ALLERGY MANAGEMENT

Small steps may reduce exposure and help keep skin comfortable.

REDUCE COMMON ENVIRONMENTAL ALLERGENS

Dust and dust mites

- Wash pet bedding and soft toys regularly; vacuum and dust often.
- If practical, reduce carpets and other fabric-covered surfaces that collect dust.
- Keep indoor humidity low when possible and change heating or air-conditioning filters regularly.
- Ask your veterinarian whether regular bathing, paw wipes, or a leave-on skin product may help your pet.

Pollen

- Watch local pollen levels and limit exposure when counts are high or on dry, windy days.
- Keep pets away from freshly mowed areas when possible.
- Wipe or rinse paws and coat after outdoor time; dry bedding and clothing indoors during high-pollen periods.

Mould

- Fix damp areas, remove visible mould safely, and improve indoor ventilation.
- Wash and dry bedding regularly and keep your pet away from damp areas where possible.

Storage mites in pet food

- Store food in a cool, dry place in a sealed container.
- Buy amounts your pet can use within a reasonable time and keep bowls clean.
- Ask your veterinarian about the best way to store your pet's specific food.

FOOD ELIMINATION TRIALS

A food trial is the main way to check for a food allergy. Your veterinarian will select a suitable diet based on your pet's food history.

- Feed only the agreed trial diet and water for the full period recommended by your vet—often 6–8 weeks or longer, depending on the plan.
- Do not give other treats, table scraps, chews, supplements, or flavoured medicines unless your veterinarian approves them.
- Everyone in the household must follow the plan to prevent accidental food exposure.
- If signs improve, your veterinarian may guide you through reintroducing the previous food to see whether symptoms return. Do not do this without veterinary guidance.

Contact your veterinarian if your pet refuses the new diet, vomits, has diarrhea, loses weight, or you are concerned about how they are doing.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

- Book an appointment for ongoing itching, hair loss, red or smelly skin, repeated ear problems, or digestive signs.
- Seek prompt veterinary advice if symptoms worsen, skin becomes painful or infected-looking, or your pet is very uncomfortable.
- Facial swelling, trouble breathing, collapse, or a sudden severe reaction needs emergency veterinary care.

TREATMENT & LONG-TERM CARE

Allergies are often managed over time with a plan tailored to each pet.

TREATMENT OPTIONS YOUR VET MAY DISCUSS

- **Itch-control medication:** helps reduce discomfort during flare-ups or as part of ongoing care.
- **Allergen-specific immunotherapy:** may be an option for some pets with environmental allergies. It is designed to help the immune system become less sensitive to identified allergens.
- **Skin and coat care:** veterinarian-recommended shampoos, foams, sprays, or wipes may remove allergens, moisturize skin, and support the skin barrier.
- **Ear care:** pets with recurring ear problems may need a specific ear-cleaning plan or treatment for infection.
- **Infection treatment:** bacterial or yeast infections can worsen itching and may need treatment on their own.
- **Diet changes:** confirmed food allergies are managed by avoiding the trigger ingredients.

Do not start, stop, or change medication, ear products, supplements, or a prescribed diet without checking with your veterinarian.

HELP PREVENT FLARE-UPS

- Use flea prevention as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Follow your pet's skin, bathing, and ear-care plan consistently.
- Keep notes or photos of flare-ups and bring them to appointments.
- Ask whether symptoms are linked to a season, a possible food trigger, an infection, or more than one cause.
- Remember that many pets have more than one allergy, and the best plan may combine several treatments.

QUICK TAKEAWAYS

- Itching is common with allergies, but other conditions can look the same.
- Your veterinarian needs to rule out parasites and infections before confirming an allergy.
- Environmental allergy testing can guide treatment; a strict food trial is needed to diagnose food allergy.
- Reducing allergen exposure and following a consistent treatment plan can help your pet stay more comfortable.

This handout is an educational summary of the supplied Pet Owner Allergy Guide. It does not replace an examination or advice from your veterinarian.