



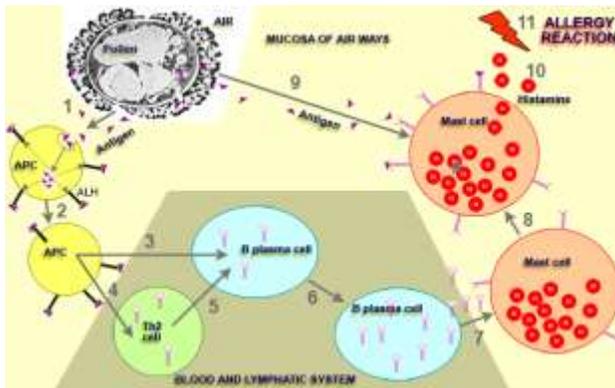
# ITCHY SKIN and ALLERGIES



The two main causes for itching can be categorized into **TWO GROUPS = PARASITES and ALLERGIES**. Fleas, Demodex mites, and Sarcoptic mites are the main topical parasites that we deal with. We can usually test for them and treat them in a straight forward manner. Allergies are not as straight forward, but can be controlled or managed.

## What are Allergies?

Allergy is a state of **hypersensitivity** in which exposure to a harmless substance known as an allergen induces the body's immune system to **"overreact."** The incidence of allergies is increasing in both humans and their pets. People with allergies usually have "hay fever" (watery eyes, runny nose and sneezing) or asthma. While pets can rarely also have respiratory allergies, more commonly they experience the effects of allergic hypersensitivities as skin problems



This diagram is an example of what happens at the cellular level in an allergic reaction. The bodies' immune system is truly amazing. Our pet's bodies are exposed to numerous virus's, bacteria, fungi, etc and the immune system controls the vast majority of these infections. Unfortunately, in the case of allergies, the immune system wrongly views and attacks things such as pollen, dust spores, dander, and individual food ingredients. Unlike the bacteria, fungi, and virus's, the allergens don't just go away - the allergens (pollen, dust spores, dander, certain food ingredients) are continually provoking the immune system, triggering a cascade of inflammatory reactions including histamine release.

**This is dog has classic symptoms of allergic dermatitis**



## **There are 3 Major Types of Allergies in Dogs**

### **1 Flea Allergy**

Flea allergic dermatitis is the most common skin disease in dogs and cats. For the flea allergic patient, 100% flea control is essential for the pet to remain symptom-free. **“But doctor, I never see fleas on my pet.”** You may not see them, but that doesn't mean they aren't there. The allergy is caused by the flea's saliva, and it only takes a few bites to induce the problem. In warm climates or in our homes, fleas may survive in low numbers year-round. Because flea allergy is so common, we recommend that complete flea control be instituted before proceeding with diagnostics for other allergies and that year-round flea control be maintained for all allergy patients.

### **2 Food Allergy**

Some pets develop specific hypersensitivities to components of their diets. The allergen usually is a major protein or carbohydrate ingredient such as beef, chicken, pork, corn, wheat, or soy. Minor ingredients such as preservatives or dyes are also potential allergens. The diagnosis of food allergy requires that we test your pet by feeding special strict diets that contain only ingredients that he has never eaten before. This is often achieved by feeding a prescription diet for a period of 10 to 16 weeks. If the signs resolve, a challenge is performed by feeding the former diet and watching for a return of the itching. If this occurs, a diagnosis of food allergy is confirmed.

### **3 Atopic Dermatitis**

Atopic dermatitis (AD) is an inherited predisposition to develop skin problems from exposure to variety of commonplace and otherwise harmless substances including the pollens of weeds, grasses and trees, as well as house dust mites and mold spores. Diagnosis of AD is made based on the results of intradermal skin testing or by in vitro blood testing. Evaluating the results of these tests helps us compile a list of allergens for a “vaccine” to decrease the pet's sensitivity. Sometimes multiple skin and/or blood tests are necessary to accurately assess the patient's allergies.

**Can Allergies be Cured?** Unfortunately, there is no cure for allergy and it is usually a life-long problem. We seek to control allergies.

**Can I have the Itching Treated without the Expense of Diagnostic Testing?** Symptomatic drug therapy can help to reduce itching. Steroids, such as prednisone tablets in particular, are often employed to stop the itch. However, without addressing the underlying cause, the itching will return and long-term use of steroids can result in many health problems.

See the additional articles; 1) flea products, 2) food allergies, 3) atopy/ environmental allergens.

