

## Seasonal Skin/Ear Allergies (Atopic dermatitis)

Has your pet had skin infections, ear infections, hair loss, seem to lick excessively, scratch at their ears a lot or seem generally itchy? There's a good chance your furry friend has an underlying allergy problem.

The single most common disorder Dr. Owen diagnoses is atopic dermatitis. Unlike typical seasonal allergies in people that cause sneezing or nasal congestion, atopic dermatitis in pets causes ear and skin problems. When we perform allergy testing in pets (see ASIT below), the most common inciting allergens are house dust mites, fleas and various local grass/tree pollens.

Since this problem is so common, numerous veterinary pharmaceutical companies have developed excellent treatment options. Although there is no cure for atopic dermatitis, it can be successfully managed.

Our team at Middletown Veterinary Clinic can determine the best atopy management plan for your pet. Often this involves an individualized atopy management plan that combines various treatments, listed below.

### Omega 3 Fatty Acid Supplements

These supplements also have a broad range of applications including treating dry coat, allergic skin disease, heart disease, kidney disease and central nervous system disorders. Omega 3 fatty acids, typically derived from fish oils, help decrease skin inflammation and strengthens the skin allergen barrier. Statistically, pets with atopy that are on a high quality omega 3 fatty acid supplement require less prescription medications to control their atopy. Since there is a wide range of quality and efficiency of this type of supplement, Dr. Owen only recommends Nutramax's Welactin.

### Topical Therapy

Based on the symptoms your pet is showing, we often use medicated ear cleaners, shampoos, wipes and other topical treatments. These treatments can significantly decrease skin/ear irritation, provide itch relief and prevent secondary infections from occurring. A large amount of mild atopy cases can be managed with omega 3 fatty acid supplements, topical therapy and as needed antihistamines.

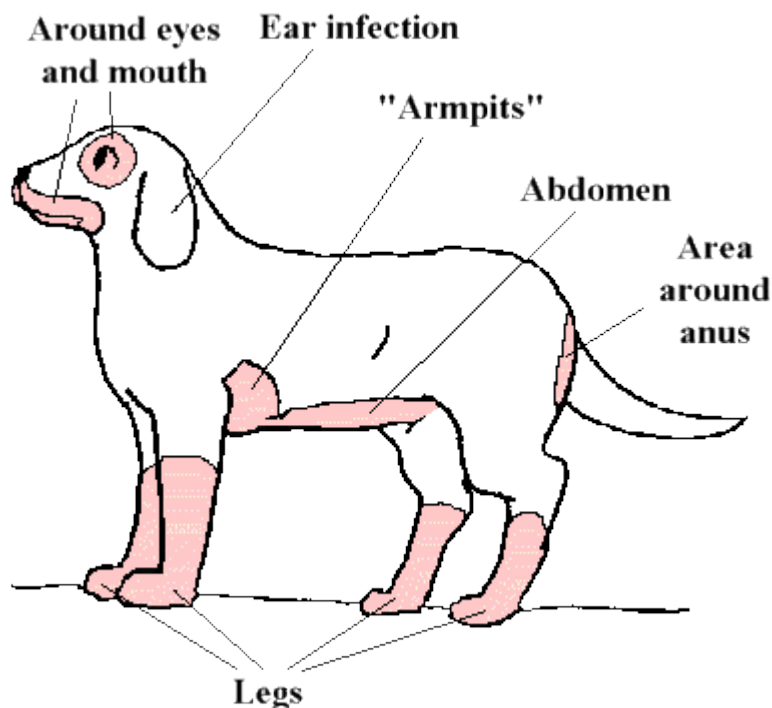


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### **Antihistamines**

There is a wide variety of antihistamines that can be used in pets. Some of these are prescription medications, some over the counter and some are more effective than others. *Always contact our office before giving any medications to your pets.* Although typically not effective enough to be used alone, antihistamines can provide itch relief from allergies when combined with other treatments.

### **Allergy Specific Immunotherapy (ASIT)**

ASIT is the most scientifically sound approach to atopy treatment. This involves sending a blood sample to an external laboratory and testing your pet's immune system against common environmental allergens. This information can then be used to give your pet "allergy shots" to gradually desensitize them to the inciting allergens. Middletown Veterinary Clinic uses HESKA laboratories for allergy testing and allergy serum for our patients. The allergy serum ("allergy shots") is now available in an oral dropper form so you don't have to worry about giving injections. In general, approximately 60% of pets on ASIT respond well and most require long term maintenance dosing.

### **Parasite Prevention**

External parasites, especially fleas (specifically their saliva), are often one of the allergens that cause atopic dermatitis. Preventing flea allergies, decreasing itchiness and controlling flea allergic dermatitis are all important reasons why regular flea prevention is important for pets with skin allergies. We offer several options for flea/tick prevention for our canine and feline patients. Please call us to discuss what options and review any special offers for our trusted parasite prevention products.

### **Cytopoint**

This is a newer treatment options with little side effects. It is given as an injection at our practice and typically lasts two months. Cytopoint is a monoclonal antibody product which helps prevent the allergic reaction from occurring when your allergic pet's body is exposed to allergens. This is a great option for many patients but it currently only available for dogs.

### **Immunosuppressant and Immunomodulatory Drugs**

These medications are used in moderate to severe cases of atopy. They include medications such as Apoquel, Atopica and steroids. These medications are often used for a short duration but some patients benefit from long term use. Since there are numerous possible side effects to their use, we will use these treatments only if other more benign options (above) are not effective enough.

### **A Brief Statement on Food Allergies**

Food allergies are not nearly as common as atopic dermatitis; however, some pets that have atopic dermatitis may also have a food allergy. There is no accurate test for food allergies in pets other than an elimination food trial with prescription veterinary diets. When pets do have a food allergy, it is due to the protein (meat) source. Grain free and raw diets are will not improve food allergies in pets and can actually cause more health problems (check out our information page on nutrition myths). Although many over the counter diets claim to be limited ingredient or contain

a special protein source, a study found that many of these over the counter diets still contain poultry, beef and lamb DNA. If you think your pet may have a food allergy, please schedule a consultation with our veterinary team.