



1359 E BUTLER AVE  
FLAGSTAFF, AZ 86001  
928-440-4020  
928-396-1171  
INFO@MIDTOWN.VET

## ALLERGIES

### Allergies in Pets: A Guide for Pet Owners

As a pet owner, it's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of allergies in your furry friends. Allergies in pets can be caused by a variety of factors such as food, environmental irritants, and some parasites. If left untreated, allergies can lead to uncomfortable symptoms and even serious health issues. Here's what you need to know about allergies in pets:

#### Symptoms of Allergies in Pets:

- Skin irritation such as itching, scratching, and redness.
- Excessive licking or chewing of paws, legs, belly, or rear end.
- Inflammation of the ears or eyes.
- Sneezing, coughing, and/or runny nose.
- Gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting or diarrhea.

#### Types of Allergies in Pets:

**Food allergies:** This is a hypersensitivity to a specific ingredient in your pet's food, such as chicken, beef, or grains. Most food allergies are protein-based.

**Environmental allergies:** These are caused by irritants in the environment such as: dust, grass, pollen, mold.

**Flea allergies:** This is a reaction to flea bites, which can cause severe itching and inflammation.

#### Treatment and Prevention:

Treatment for allergies may include flea/tick prevention, medication to relieve symptoms, a change in diet, and avoiding exposure to the allergens (like avoiding grassy areas). Regular grooming/bathing can also help alleviate symptoms. We also advise vacuuming regularly and using air purifiers, to help reduce environmental allergens in your home.

#### Over the Counter Options for DOGS ONLY:

Prescription allergy medications can be very expensive, so it's always worth exploring the more cost effective route with over-the-counter antihistamines to see if they provide your pet with relief.

**Cetirizine (Generic Zyrtec) 10mg tablets:** Give ONE tablet by mouth ONCE a day (Every 24 hours) as needed for itchiness. This is an antihistamine and may cause sedation. You may purchase this over the counter at your local pharmacy, please ensure the dose is correct and that the **ONLY active ingredient is Cetirizine.**

**Diphenhydramine (Generic Benadryl) 25mg tablets:** Give 1 milligram, per pound of weight. So if your pet is 12lbs, give half a tablet at a time. If your pet is 50lbs, give 2 tablets at a time. This medication can be given up to every 8 hours, but may cause sedation.

**Loratadine (Generic Claritin) 10mg tablets:** Please give ONE tablet by mouth ONCE a day (Every 24 hours) as needed for itchiness. This is an antihistamine and may cause sedation. You may purchase this over the counter at your local pharmacy, please ensure the dose is correct and that the **ONLY active ingredient is Loratadine.**



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## If over the counter medications aren't enough:

### Prescription Options:

When the over-the-counter options are not providing relief, we still have options, but as mentioned earlier, these options are more expensive. While the next two options we're about to discuss can be very effective in relieving allergy symptoms, we do always recommend **allergy testing**. Often allergy testing will give us some answers as to what your pet is reacting to, and then we can try to cut back their exposure to that allergen. If we can avoid the allergens, we can often avoid those expensive prescriptions.

**Apoquel Tablets:** The active ingredient in Apoquel is oclacitinib, so we just prefer to call it Apoquel. It's the most commonly prescribed medicine for fast, effective relief of allergic itch and inflammation due to atopic and allergic dermatitis. This medication is taken orally, up to twice daily initially, with the goal of reducing the dose over time to the lowest effective dose for the pet. The average price for a month supply of Apoquel is over \$115. The allergy test comes out to be around \$350. Therefore, approx. 3 months of treatment with Apoquel costs the same as testing for the cause of the problem, instead of just masking the symptoms.

#### *How does it work?*

Apoquel works by preventing the production of cytokines (specific proteins) and can help control itchiness. This helps break the cycle of itching and scratching and allows your dog's skin to heal. It can cause some level of immune suppression with long term use.

**Cytopoint Injections:** Also known as Lokivetmab. It works by targeting a specific protein called IL-31, which is responsible for causing itchiness and inflammation in the skin. When administered, Cytopoint binds to IL-31 and prevents it from binding to its receptors, which stops the itch and reduces inflammation. Unlike other allergy medications, Cytopoint does not suppress the immune system and has minimal side effects. The cost of a Cytopoint injection is dependent on your pet's size, but the average cost ranges from \$90 to \$200 an injection. These injections can provide anywhere from 4 to 8 weeks of allergy relief.

### Allergy Testing:

The patented SPOT Platinum+ test (from Nextmune) is the most trusted in-vitro (blood/serum) allergy test on the market.

The SPOT Platinum+ test examines 92 different environmental allergens and 35 different food ingredients. This includes indoor allergens, such as house-dust mites and molds, and outdoor ones like pollens from trees, grasses and weeds. After performing the SPOT Platinum+ test, you will have a much better understanding of what you should avoid to reduce your pet's allergy symptoms. The lab will also provide us with a list of diets that are considered "sensitivity-free," based on your pet's results.

### Treatment options following an allergy test:

Hypo-sensitization is the gold standard of medical treatment for some types of allergies. Nextmune's treatment sets are custom-made, based on your animal's allergy profile. They contain the allergenic extract designed to gradually introduce your animal's immune system to the offending allergens, with the goal of improving your pet's tolerance to that allergen. It is available in two formats: subcutaneous injections and sublingual (oral) drops.

The injectable therapy is considered more effective than the oral therapy, but it does require giving your pet "shots" at home. It begins with every-other-day injections and slowly reduces over time until you are only giving injections once-monthly. The oral therapy is given daily, forever.

Hypo-sensitization is effective and safe for long-term use, and your pet may be on it for the rest of its life in order to keep the disease under control.