

Le Sueur Veterinary Clinic  
700 North Main St, Le Sueur, MN 56058  
507-665-2377 www.lesueurvet.com



Belle Plaine Animal Hospital  
304 South Ash St, Belle Plaine, MN 56011  
952-873-8387 www.belleplainevet.com

## Allergy Management

Allergy, also known as atopy of allergic dermatitis, is an immune response to something the body considers a foreign substance.

Allergies are inherited.

Allergies **cannot** be cured.

Allergies are a lifelong disease and can sometimes get worse over time.

For more information on atopy (allergies) check out these websites

[www.priory.com/vet/vetatop1.htm](http://www.priory.com/vet/vetatop1.htm)

[www.vetmed.illinois.edu/petcolumns/](http://www.vetmed.illinois.edu/petcolumns/)

### Start early

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

You will achieve the best results for your pet if you begin treatment and prevention early.

The earlier a patient with allergy is started on an aggressive treatment program, the easier the disease will be to control (this includes referral to a dermatologist). Patients that have chronic disease or recurrent infections have immune system changes as well as functional alteration in normal skin function which can make it more difficult to treat the dermatitis. By starting therapy early, cheaper, more simple therapies will likely work well to improve the patient's disease.

Managing allergies involves the following steps:

1. Avoid common allergens. (Allergens are what cause the symptoms of allergies)  
The most common allergens in the home environment are house dust mites, molds, and cigarette smoke. These as well as other allergens (wool, sisal, etc.) can often be reduced or avoided with several easy techniques.
  - \* Throw away any foam or stuffed dog bed that is older than 1 year. Dog beds are one of the most common sources of house dust mites. Wash all dog bedding every 7 days using hot water.
  - \* Do not allow anyone to smoke in the house.
  - \* Use a HEPA air filter to clean the air.
  - \* Dehumidify the home using a high efficiency dehumidifier to keep the humidity below 40%. This will help prevent house dust mites, mold growth, and fleas.
  - \* If you suspect your pet is allergic to grass pollens, keep them off the grass.

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- \* If you suspect your pet is allergic to ragweed, keep them out of the weeds.
2. Treat all secondary bacterial and yeast infections.  
Allergic disease causes changes in the normal function of the skin that prevents it from fighting off infections. As a result, up to 80% of allergic patients will have secondary infections. These infections can mimic other diseases making accurate diagnosis difficult. Additionally, the infections can cause severe itching and add to the inflammation of the allergic reaction.
    - \* Antibiotics for at least 21 days will be needed for each episode of bacterial folliculitis (pyoderma - skin infection).
    - \* Yeast infections will require topical and/or systemic antifungal medications for at least 1 month.
    - \* Ear infections usually require ear cleaning every 3-7 days and a topical medication to kill the bacteria or yeast. Often a topical steroid is used to decrease the inflammation caused by the allergy and infection.
    - \* Infections of the feet (pododermatitis) are often treated with topical antimicrobial wipes, shampoos, or rinses used frequently.
  3. Use effective flea control every month. Frontline Plus is the best. Many dogs that are allergic are allergic to fleas. One flea bite can make them intensely itchy for 3 months. Conversely flea bites can increase the allergic reaction to all other allergens including house dust mites, pollens, and molds.
  4. Bathe your pet every 3-7 days.  
This will wash off many allergens and help to kill and prevent the secondary infections caused by yeast and bacteria. It will also help soothe the irritation their skin is experiencing. Be sure to use veterinary recommended shampoos - one that is formulated for the pet's skin pH. Virbac makes excellent pet shampoos.
  5. Consider changing the diet to a skin friendly food or even an aggressive food allergy trial. Feeding a diet with high levels of essential fatty acids (salmon oil, borage oil, flax oil) and without beef or dairy ingredients will help reduce many allergic reactions regardless of the cause.  
  
If food allergy is suspected, feeding a diet with only one protein (rabbit, duck, kangaroo, or fish) and one carbohydrate (potato) for 10 weeks will help diagnose many food allergies. During this time **NO** other foods, treats, chew bones, or chewable medications can be administered.
  6. Use topical and symptomatic therapy to help reduce the allergy and itch.
    - \* Antihistamines can be effective therapy with few side effects.
    - \* Treat with high-dose essential fatty acids (if not already in the diet). We recommend Eicosaderm.
    - \* Anti-itch conditioners after each bath can be very soothing.

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\* Genesis spray is a strong topical steroid spray that can work well in controlling the itching. You must use gloves when applying. Do not apply to skin that is infected. It can make infections very much worse.

7. Allergy testing

Blood allergy testing can be used to identify to which allergens the patient is reacting. This information then be used to formulate an allergy vaccine to try to desensitize the immune system to those reactive allergens. (Allergy shots) The therapy has few side-effects and helps improve approximately 75% of allergic patients.

8. Cyclosporine Therapy (Atopica)

Cyclosporine is an effective treatment that stops the immune system from stimulating the allergic reaction. It is effective in 75% of patients and has few adverse side-effects. It is very expensive. The treatments are started every day but can sometimes be reduced to every other day. It is often a life-long treatment.

