



## Does your cat have allergies?

Like people, cats too can develop allergies.<sup>1</sup> This occurs when their immune systems become sensitive to substances present in their surroundings.

Feline allergies are generally divided into 3 main categories: flea allergy, environmental allergies (atopic dermatitis), and food allergy. Flea allergy and environmental allergies – the ones that cause “hay fever” symptoms in humans – are the most common. However, cats often have multiple allergies, so a visit to your veterinarian or a veterinary dermatologist is highly recommended.

### Symptoms

Itching and skin problems are often associated with allergic dermatitis. Your cat may exhibit some of these symptoms:

- Sneezing, coughing, and wheezing – especially if your cat has been diagnosed with asthma
- Itchy, runny eyes
- Ear infections

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<sup>1</sup> [Pet Health Network](#)

- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Snoring caused by an inflamed throat
- Paw chewing or swollen, sensitive paws

A few of the allergens that cause these symptoms:

- Pollen, grass, plants, mold, mildew, and other organic substances
- Food
- Perfumes and colognes
- Fleas or flea-control products
- Household cleaning products
- Prescription drugs
- Some cat litters

Gastrointestinal symptoms usually accompany a food allergy, so it is important to avoid feeding your cat food to which he or she has a known allergy. Also, allergies tend to be more common among outdoor cats because they are exposed to a wider range of potential allergens, especially from plants and organic matter.

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis must be made by your veterinarian. If your veterinarian suspects your cat has allergies, she will perform blood tests and also experiment with dietary changes to help narrow down the cause. If she thinks your cat has a skin allergy, it is likely you will be referred to a veterinary dermatologist for further evaluation.



### Treatment & Prevention

The best way to treat your cat's allergies is to remove the allergens from his or her environment. For instance, if your cat's allergies are caused by fleas, using veterinarian-recommended flea and tick preventatives can eliminate the cause. If the problem is cat litter, substituting your normal litter for a dust-free alternative may do the trick.

When it comes to pollen, fungus, mold, or dust, bathing your cat a couple of times per week can help alleviate itching. Your veterinarian can recommend an appropriate shampoo to help you avoid drying out your cat's skin.

A diagnosis of food allergies may require you to provide your cat with a prescription diet or even home-cooked meals free of the offending allergens. Your veterinarian will provide

recommendations as to the best course of action. It is possible that your cat will need dietary supplements to ensure he gets all the vital nutrients he needs.

### Medication

If allergens affecting your cat can't be removed from the environment. Your veterinarian may prescribe:

- Cortisone, steroids or allergy injections for airborne pollens
- Antihistamines as a preventative
- Flea prevention products

### How do allergies affect cats suffering from asthma?

If your cat is allergic to environmental pollutants, it may worsen your cat's asthma. To help alleviate the symptoms, your vet may prescribe medications that open your cat's airway for the short-term; long term solutions include corticosteroids.

### A healthy reminder

Cigarette smoke is bad for your cat, especially if your cat has asthma.