



Chastain Veterinary Medical Group Pet Health Fact Sheet

Allergy Testing and Treatment

Surprised? Didn't think pets suffered from normal allergies? They sure do!

And the Dallas area is the “allergy capital” of Texas.

Allergies (also known as inhalant allergies, allergic dermatitis, or atopy) vary a great deal in both their severity and age of onset. Among dogs, allergies can start as early as 3 months and progress through to old age. Symptoms may be so mild at first that they are not noticed but are usually progressive and become clinically apparent before 3 years of age. Among humans, the nose is the primary target of allergies - and hay fever symptoms predominate. Among dogs and cats, the skin is the major target organ, so itching and scratching are the main symptoms.

Depending on what they are allergic to, some dogs and cats have seasonal allergies while others are itchy all year long. The biggest offenders are tree pollens, grass and weed pollens, mold spores and the house dust mites. Food allergies are also a common offender.

Allergies in dogs and cats tend to run in certain breeds and along family lines, somewhat like they do in people. If an individual's parents have allergies, then there's a good chance that that individual will develop them eventually as well.

Certain dog breeds, such as the **Cocker Spaniel** and **Golden Retriever** seem to be especially allergy prone. Fortunately, there are now several options for diagnosing and treating allergies. Veterinary specialists and certain general practice veterinarians, such as those of us at the Chastain Veterinary Medical Group, can perform intradermal allergy testing.

Intradermal Skin Allergy Testing is the ideal method of testing for inhalant allergies or atopy. This procedure is also the most accurate method of identifying offending allergens for possible avoidance or inclusion in an allergy desensitization treatment program. Serum allergy testing is an easier option, but the costs are not much different and we prefer the superior accuracy of Intradermal Skin Allergy Testing.

Many veterinarians and veterinary allergy specialists have achieved good Intradermal Skin Allergy Test results by taking advantage of allergen cross reactivity and testing for reactions to as few as 25-35 allergens. At the Chastain Veterinary Medical Group we test for reactions to 52 of the most common allergens in this area. This procedure takes longer, but for us, we feel it provides a clearer picture of the pet's true allergy status.

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Meadow Brook Animal Hospital – 972-529-5033 · Preston Road Animal Hospital – 972-239-1309

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Is it important to treat allergies?

Mild allergies in a pet can sometimes be safely ignored, especially in the early stages. However, in time, most animals will need some form of treatment. This treatment is generally life long.

Allergies are rarely cured. The goal is control.

Allergy treatment generally takes the form of some combination of the following:

- Medicated baths,
- Soothing cream rinses,
- Anti-itch sprays,
- Allergy shots (hyposensitization injection),
- Antihistamines and special fatty acid formulations and when necessary corticosteroids in judicious dosages, with careful monitoring.

In some cases, a change in lifestyle or lifelong treatment is necessary. As always, prevention of flea and tick infestations, good grooming and a healthy diet should strengthen your pet's resistance to allergies.

Remember! Pet allergies can be serious, so call us today if your pet is itching!

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