25 WAYS to Eliminate Your Dog’s Constant Scratching.

Proven tips, tricks and strategies to bring relief to your canine companion
Spring and summer are often the most uncomfortable times in the year for a dog. Uncontrollable scratching leads to hot spots, skin abrasions and even hair loss.

Allergies are the main reason for itchy skin. Humans sniffle, sneeze, cough and wheeze when our bodies have been insulted by an allergen. Dogs most frequently itch and scratch. The difference has to do with cells in the body that respond to allergens by production of a chemical called histamine.

It is the release of histamine that triggers symptoms by causing small blood vessels to leak and ooze fluid, resulting in a swelling of tissue. In humans, these cells are highly concentrated in the area of the eyes, nose and windpipe. That’s why people with hay fever experience nasal congestion, a result of leaky vessels and swelling in the nose. In animals the cells are concentrated on the sides of the face, paws, armpit and groin.

Controlling the scratching requires a holistic and integrated approach. The first step is to identify what is causing the itch. Here is a list of the 4 main reasons why dog’s have itchy skin and solutions for each.
Atopic Dermatitis, called canine atopy, is fairly common, affecting approximately 10 percent of all dogs, most particularly Golden and labrador retrievers, lhasa apsos, dalmatians, poodles, boxers, bulldogs, West Highland Terriers, wire fox terriers, and Irish and English setters.

Dog’s react first to air-borne pollens (which explains why your pooch may be itchier in the spring when pollen is high).

Eventually, your dog will show signs of allergic reactions to pollen, dust mites, trees, weeds, mould spores, even people dander.

Whether the dog is inside or outdoors many allergens lurk in the air.

The itching and scratching can lead to hair loss, with her skin becoming flaky and thick.

This is the hardest to diagnose because they are allergic to everything! IF it’s not fleas or food, it’s probably this.
Ways to manage Atopic Dermatitis

- **Remove the Allergen.** Well duh. But for most people this is almost impossible. (vacuum as much as possible)

- **Wash your dog!** Since environmental allergens are usually absorbed through the skin, weekly bathing can prevent itchiness. [Click to learn more about shampoo therapy](#)

- **BRUSH BRUSH BRUSH!** Like washing your dog, daily brushing can also help rid your dog’s coat of allergens. Also, the brushing will stimulate the skin and increase blood flow to that area. This results in the quicker removal of toxins from the skin and minimizes inflammation.

- **Fish Oil** has been shown to help with itching and also has anti-inflammatory qualities.

- **Cover it up!** If your dog is scratching the same spot over and over, cover it up with a doggie Tshirt or doggie booties or lick strip. By placing a barrier between your dog’s claws and the abrasion you allow the irritation to heal.

- **CHILLAX!** Your dog may be working himself into a frenzy and the scratching becomes a nervous habit. Sleepytime Tonic won’t cure the itchy skin, but it WILL relax and calm

- **Spot On!** If your dog has a particular part of his body he’s really scratching or chewing at, consider using Itchin’ For Relief. This is a convenient, easy to use spray with a unique nozzle to direct the spray to where it’s really needed.

- **Allergy Shots.** A vet gives your dog very small doses of that allergen, and gradually increase the dose over time. That way his immune system gets used to the allergen, and is less likely to react to it. Relatively good success rate however it’s expensive and it isn’t a quick fix (1 month to 1 year)

- **If nothing else works,** talk to your VET to see if treatments like atopica, desensitising injections and steroids are right for your dog.
Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD) is the most common inflammatory skin disorder in dogs. Although all dogs can become infested with fleas not all dogs will develop FAD. This condition only arises in certain dogs that have an allergy to the flea’s saliva.

- **When** fleas bite your dog, they inject their saliva into his skin.
- **In dogs** that are prone to FAD, this sets off an allergic reaction, causing the dog to irritate the wound even more than expected.
Dermatitis results and the damage to the skin allows for bacterial invasion. Now the problem snowballs even more due to this secondary bacterial infection of the wound. This type of reaction is at its worst in high summer when fleas are most common, but can last all year if you don’t have good flea control in your home.

# Ways to Manage Flea Allergy Dermatitis

- **Remove** the live fleas and prevent new fleas from jumping on board. There are countless over the counter products like Advantix to help kill live fleas on your dog. They are relatively safe but not for every animal. If yours is older, or battling an acute disease, don’t use it. We recommend trying natural products first like Flea the Scene, Dirty & Harry OUTDOOR spray with citronella, or other natural remedies.

- **Feed a healthy diet.** Dogs are less likely to be flea magnets and they will be more resistant to the flea bite.

- **Wash your dog** with a colloidal oatmeal-based shampoo to break the cycle of itching and use topical sprays.

- **Treat your environment**. Remember too that the flea’s life cycle involves some time spent away from the dog’s body. So don’t forget to take the necessary precautions to treat his environment in the home as well!

- **Antihistamines.** Effective in about 30% of dogs, most are the same as those used in humans (Benadryl)

- **Manage the itchy skin** – use many of the same suggestions from the ‘Ways to manage Atopic Dermatitis’ page.
Usually the first thing someone will ask you is if you’ve changed the diet. But, whether he’s eating a gourmet diet or a bargain basement dog food, if it contains an ingredient that he’s allergic to, he’ll scratch.

The other important thing to keep in mind is that allergies don’t occur when you change your dog’s diet. Food allergies don’t develop suddenly. He will have been eating the same food for a long time with no problems, then bang! The itching starts.

Most dog foods contain similar combinations of meat protein and carbohydrates, so just changing brands of food may not help. He will still be eating the same proteins and the same carbohydrates, so he’ll still be itchy. You need to make sure you’re changing to a very different higher quality food.
Keep in mind

- Common triggers include wheat and corn products and protein-heavy foods, such as meat/beef, dairy, and chicken.

- Typical symptoms of food allergies include facial itching, foot or leg chewing, recurrent ear infections, and belly itching.

- You can suspect your pup has food allergies if the itchiness is not a seasonal problem like atopy, if she isn’t responding to cortisone-types of veterinary medications, and if her skin issues developed after the age of 5 or 6.

- 10-20% of all allergy cases in dogs are food allergies.
**Ways to Manage Food Allergies**

- **Are you sure?** Rule out any other causes of itchy skin. Make sure your flea control is good: *Flea the Scene* is a safe and gentle flea control that won’t cause irritation to traumatized skin. Often skin that is red and itchy can develop a secondary bacterial infection, which is also very itchy.

- **Make a drastic change** in your dog’s food. Most dog foods contain similar combinations of meat protein and carbohydrates, so changing brands of food may not help. He will still be eating the same proteins and the same carbohydrates, so he’ll still be itchy. We recommend the Grain Free food made by DOG for DOG.

- **Undergo a food trial** - This is a labor-intensive and tedious process. To learn more about food trials [Click here](#).

- **Manage the itchy skin** — use many of the same suggestions from the ‘Ways to manage Atopic Dermatitis’ page.
Contact Dermatitis is a fairly uncommon disease caused by direct contact of your pet’s skin with certain plants and grasses, medications, and particular chemicals.

Humans are much more susceptible to contact skin allergies than canines because a dog’s hair coat works as a barrier to the allergen.

You’ll notice the signs on the parts of her body making direct contact with the substance – around her neck, on her belly, legs or feet.

The most frequent cause of contact allergies in dogs is a plant species called Wandering Jew, a member of the Spiderwort family. However, dogs have also been known to be allergic to grass, carpet cleaning products and timber stains.

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Ways to Manage Contact Allergies

- **Diagnose** - You can have your dog allergy tested at the vet or if you have an idea of what the culprit is, conduct your own trial first.

- **Manage** - prevent your dog from having access to the plant or chemical he is reacting to. If that’s impossible because your dog is allergic to grass try using a pair of booties when you go out for a walk.

- **Wash** your dog within two hours if he touched something like poison ivy. This will very effectively eliminate the poison that causes itching.

- **Treat the itchy skin** – use many of the same suggestions from the ‘Ways to manage Atopic Dermatitis’ page
Some dogs may have one or more allergies

Many dogs have a low immune system which makes them more affected by the environment. According to Los Angeles Veterinarian Alfred Plechner, the main reasons for this are:

- Highly processed, food containing inferior quality ingredients
- Cosmetic breeding
- Overvaccinating
- Proliferation of chemicals and pollutants

So, for many dogs the combination of any of the above along with the advent of flea season may be enough to trip your dog into a full allergic reaction.

Other things you can do to control allergies

- Supplement the diet with vitamins and minerals
- Switch to natural non-toxic products at home
- Keep dust levels down inside the house.
Switch from plastic to ceramic feeding bowls. Some say that red bowls seem to evoke more reaction than other colors, but no one knows why.

Switch to a puppy diet which has more fat than the adult diet. The addition of more fat may make the difference.

There are many home remedies you can try. Click here

Other reasons a dog may have itchy skin

- **Hormonal problems.** An underactive thyroid gland can result in changes in the skin which predispose to bacterial or fungal infection. Cushing’s Disease, caused by an overactive adrenal gland, can also lead to secondary infection. These infections are usually itchy. Diagnosis is usually straightforward – your vet will have a good idea based on clinical signs and it can be confirmed with blood tests. Management involves treating the underlying hormonal problem, and giving your dog antibiotics or antifungal medication to control the itchy infection.

- **Drug reactions.** Some dogs have an unexpected reaction to a drug which causes skin inflammation and itching. This can be very difficult to identify. Diagnosis depends on the itch starting soon after a drug is given to your dog, and it easing when the drug is stopped. Skin biopsies may be helpful. Treatment is easy – don’t give your dog that drug anymore!

- **Pain.** Orthopedic problems such as back or hip pain may cause your dog to scratch that area to get some relief. There can also be pain associated with docked tails which can lead to scratching around the rump. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels can suffer from a painful condition called syringomyelia which results in them scratching the back of their head and neck.
Parasites. Sarcoptes is a little mite which causes severe itching in dogs, and also in you if you’re unlucky enough to become infected! It can be tricky to diagnose, as your vet will need to identify it in a skin scraping. If a scraping is negative, it may be worth treating your dog for Sarcoptes, just to rule it out.

Another mite that can affect dogs is Demodex. This mite doesn’t cause an itch, but it can cause a secondary bacterial infection of the skin, which is extremely irritating.

Fear and anxiety. Some dogs respond to anxiety by scratching to the point of self-mutilation. It’s important that you treat the anxiety while you manage the itch, otherwise it won’t resolve. Give your dog some Sleepytime Tonic to help calm both of you.

Cold Weather Itching. During cold weather we turn on the heater which sucks the moisture out of the area. This leaves us with dry itchy skin.
6 Reasons Why Your Dog May Be Licking His Paws

1. **Allergy:** Often dogs will lick their paws if they have an itch – although it can be due to itchy paws, it can also be a result of an itch elsewhere. Oftentimes when dogs feel itchy, they just lick somewhere accessible – the paws – as a way of soothing the irritation.

2. **Injury:** Damaged skin also causes itchiness. This can arise secondary to problems like flea allergy, or it can be a primary problem. It’s not uncommon for dogs to cut their paws, or even to have foreign material such as grass seeds stuck in the skin between their toes.

3. **Habit:** Boredom or lack of exercise can often lead to licking, especially in dogs left home alone for long periods of time.
4. **Anxiety:** This can be linked to boredom, for instance if dogs become anxious when alone, but other incidents can also cause anxiety. Simple things like a change in routine can lead to anxiety in some dogs, as can additions to the family, such as a new baby or a new pet.

5. **Compulsive Disorder:** Some dogs develop obsessive, compulsive issues that lead to constant licking. Although uncommon, this can be very difficult to control.

6. **Bacteria-Paws** can be susceptible to infections with bacteria that love moisture. Try Epi Otic, an Ear Cleanser but it does the trick!

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**Psychological & Habitual Scratching**

**Dogs** can and do suffer from obsessive compulsive behavioral problems, usually due to anxiety. This can occur if a dog spends a lot of time alone, and doesn't get enough physical and mental stimulation.

OR many times dogs work themselves into such a scratching frenzy that nothing you do will will help.

In either case try this-- Break the pattern:

**Distraction!** Every time she scratches, interrupt her and divert her attention to a kong or bully stick

**Exercise-** it’s amazing how dogs forget their woes when they’re out playing!

**Stop It!** Physically stop her from scratching by bandaging the affected area, using a tshirt, booties, or use a spray to numb the area and make the taste bitter
Calm Down Use a calming agent like Sleepytime Tonic for anxiety. This can make it easier for her to learn new behaviors without the added burden of feeling stressed.

Treat any irritation in the skin that has developed from his constant scratching. Wash him in Comfy Dog Shampoo; its colloidal oatmeal will ease his itch and reduce inflammation. You can, if you wish, follow it up with Fur Butter Deep Conditioning Treatment for an enhanced effect.

A few Other Skin Conditions

**Hot Spots** are a bacterial infection of the skin that are associated with skin allergies. They often affect short coated breeds such as Labrador Retrievers. These infections appear suddenly and spread rapidly. [Click to learn more.](#)

**Demodectic Mange** - Mange is the term for skin disease due to mite infestation, and there are two different forms of this condition in dogs, caused by different mite species. One of these is demodectic mange (or demodecosis). [Click here to learn more.](#)

**Pyoderma** is a bacterial infection of the skin and is usually secondary to some predisposing skin disease like allergies or hypothyroidism. Signs include red bumps, scabs and hair loss. [Click here to learn more](#)

**Malassezia** - If your dog smells awful has a greasy coat and is constantly scratching it means your dog may have a fungus called Malassezia. This little yeast organism is responsible for skin infections that are especially itchy, smelly and greasy to the touch. [Click here to learn more](#)
DISTRACTION! Every time she scratches, interrupt her and divert her attention to a peanut butter filled hollow toy like a kong or bully stick.

EXERCISE- it’s amazing how dogs forget their woes when they’re out playing!

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**ASK THE VET**-If nothing else works, talk to your vet to see if treatments like atopica, desensitising injections and steroids are right for your dog.
Join the Movement & Help Us Spread the Word!

The number of dogs in shelters is growing daily to the point of overcrowding and sadly, dogs are suffering from a lack of proper nutrition and care. It’s our mission at DOG for DOG to feed as many shelter dogs as possible!

Here’s how it works:

You buy a bag of our food or treats, and we give a meal to a dog in need. You have to feed your dog anyway, right? So why not choose healthy food and treats that also give back?

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