



At the present time, the only reliable way to diagnose allergies (pollen, dust, etc.) in dogs and cats is through intradermal allergy testing, commonly called skin testing. Although allergy blood tests for dogs and cats are commercially available, they are controversial due to their inconsistent results. Intradermal allergy (skin) testing allows us to pinpoint the exact nature of your pet's allergies and, more importantly, provides the information necessary to custom formulate an allergy vaccine to desensitize your pet. It is ideal, but not required, that corticosteroids be withdrawn for 2-4 weeks prior to testing, while antihistamines and other nonsteroidal anti-itch medications be stopped for 7-10 days. Use of these medications could invalidate the results of the skin test.

Allergen avoidance is often helpful in controlling allergies but is difficult in our southern environment. Your pet's symptoms can be reduced by limiting the amount of exposure to an allergen (*things your pet is allergic to*). Avoidance is the best method to controlling the allergies, but it is usually not practical. Here are some recommendations to help with avoidance around your home:

House Dust Mites or Fleas

- Wash bedding in HOT water & detergent weekly
- Use memory foam vs. stuffed beds
- Barrier type pillow/mattress covers if pet sleeps on your bed
- Keep pet in non-carpeted rooms if possible
- Frequently mop all non-carpeted rooms
- Change A/C filters frequently and keep humidity in the home to a minimum
- Practice good flea control with oral or topical prescription product once a month AND year-round

Mold, Storage Mites

- Use dehumidifiers
- Avoid feed storage areas/barns
- Store food in original bags and in airtight containers
- Clean food and water bowls daily
- Avoid confining pets to rooms with high moisture levels (bathrooms, laundry rooms)
- Prevent access to crawl spaces under house

Pollens

- Avoid swimming in lakes and ponds; shampoo after swimming even in pools and salt water
- Keep grass cut short
- Rinse pet after exposure to high grasses/weeds
- Keep pet indoors while mowing lawns
- Keep pet indoors at dusk and early morning during heavy pollen season and insect season



Environmental allergens we test for ...

Trees

- Pine
- Ash
- Birch
- Elm
- Maple/Box Elder
- Oak
- Sycamore
- Hickory
- Red Cedar
- Black Walnut
- Sweet Gum
- Mulberry
- Palm
- Cottonwood
- Black Willow
- Bayberry
- Hackberry
- Bald Cypress

Weeds

- Cocklebur
- English Plantain
- Lambs Quarter
- Pigweed
- Ragweed
- Dandelion
- Dock Sorrel
- Goldenrod
- Dog Fennel
- Rough Marsh Elder
- Common Mugwort
- Baccharis

Mold Spores

- Alternaria
- Fusarium
- Aspergillus
- Cladosporium
- Penicillium
- Curvularia
- Mucor
- Grass Smut
- Malassezia

Grasses

- Bermuda
- Timothy
- Kentucky Blue
- Fescue
- Johnson
- Rye
- Bahia

Environmentals

- D. farinae
- D. pteronyssinus
- House Dust
- Cat Dander
- Feathers

Insects

- Mosquito
- Flea
- Cockroach
- Black Ant
- House Fly



The following is a brief outline of what an intradermal allergy test involves:

- ✚ A mild intravenous sedative is administered to relax your pet. The sedative used is very safe and is completely reversed using an "antidote-like" drug after the procedure is finished. The sedative simply relaxes your Fur Kid to allow for adequate comfort of at least 30 minutes while the test is administered. The entire procedure can be as short as 35 minutes or as long as 1- 2 hours, depending on how quickly your pet becomes sedate. Since an overly excited or frightened pet will not have meaningful test results, sedation is required for every patient undergoing intradermal allergy testing. Testing must be done in a quiet room without their family to avoid sensory overstimulation that can be created by the sedative. Because a small percentage of dogs and most cats may become nauseated from the sedative, we recommend withholding food 8-12 hours prior to the test, if possible but it is not required. Water should be given as usual.
- ✚ While your Fur Kid is resting comfortably, we clip an area extending from the chest to the abdomen and inject the 58 allergens mentioned above.
- ✚ Positive reactions, which look like small red bumps, will occur within minutes after the injections are made. The results are recorded, and a formula is created to generate the allergy vaccine.
- ✚ Effective symptomatic treatment is recommended to immediately control your pet's itching. Pets who do not respond to non-steroidal medications or are severely itchy may need to be given corticosteroids to prevent temporary suffering from their allergies. Your Fur Kid will probably need some form of medication for at least 3-9 months following the initiation of the allergy vaccine. We will work with you in determining the best type, dosage, and schedule of symptomatic therapy for your allergic Fur Kid.
- ✚ Although usually unnecessary, you may apply a topical over the counter corticosteroid cream for three days following the skin test. This will help reduce any irritation which may have been caused by the clipping and testing.
- ✚ A vaccine will be custom formulated based on the results of the allergy test. The vaccine is almost always available at the time of the skin test. When refills are needed, please call ahead to place a vaccine order. Orders are usually filled within a 2-week turnaround time. You can pick up the vaccine at our office or have it shipped to your home or work.
- ✚ Vaccines are available in two different forms, injection or orally. Approximately 60%-85% of pets placed on desensitization injections will benefit from them. It typically takes 4-6 months of vaccine treatment before you will see any improvement, but it may be as long as 9-12 months before improvement is noticeable. As mentioned above, medication must often be used during this period to keep your Fur Kid comfortable. If your pet has not appreciably improved after 1 year of allergy vaccine use, we would encourage you to try the other route of administration (*give oral instead of injection or injection instead of oral*) for another year before the program is abandoned. If beneficial, the vaccine will be continued for the rest of your Fur Kid's life.