

Allergy tests for atopic dermatitis

Atopic dermatitis is a common allergic skin disease associated with immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies to environmental allergens.

Pets with atopic dermatitis often benefit from allergy shots (immunotherapy). Immunotherapy is a process in which offending allergens are injected subcutaneously in gradually increasing amounts, inducing tolerance. The main benefit of immunotherapy is its ability to reduce the severity of atopic dermatitis, and thereby reduce a pet's reliance on symptom-relieving drugs.

Successful immunotherapy begins with allergy tests. These tests do not diagnose a patient as having atopic dermatitis, but rather identify offending environmental allergens. Most, but not all, atopic patients have positive reactions on allergy testing. Two types of allergy tests are used in cats and dogs: intradermal allergy tests identify reactions to allergens injected directly into the skin (see below), while serum allergy tests measure circulating allergen-specific IgE antibodies.

Which test is better? Each test has certain advantages and disadvantages, and for each pet, one test may be the more appropriate one. Factors veterinary dermatologists consider in selecting the test include the condition of the skin, the overall health of the pet, the ability to withdraw certain medications, the time of year, and even the species of the pet. In many cases, combining the two tests gives the best results.

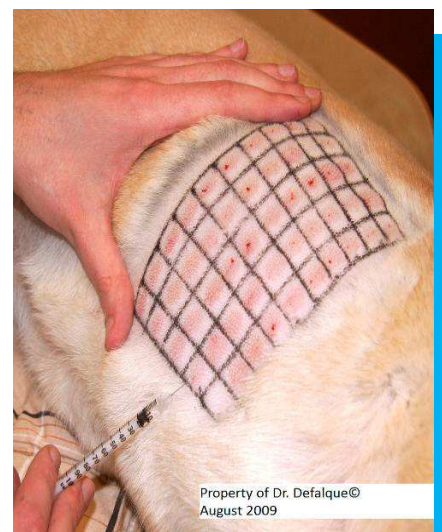
Important note: We do not offer intradermal or serum testing for food antigens as these tests are not reliable for the diagnosis of food allergies in pets.

Intradermal allergy test protocol

The intradermal allergy test is the procedure veterinary dermatologists perform most often to identify offending allergens in dogs.

The patient is first sedated in order to avoid any discomfort. A rectangular area of hair is clipped on the side of the chest. Within a grid layout, the skin is injected with small amounts of approximately 48 environmental allergens. This panel includes house dust, house dust mites, trees/grasses/weeds pollens, insects, fleas and molds.

Within 20 minutes, redness and swelling is evident at the site of positive reactions. With the allergy test(s) complete, a determination will be made whether or not immunotherapy and/or allergen avoidance are appropriate.



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Guidelines for intradermal allergy tests

Intradermal allergy testing is a delicate procedure, so it is helpful to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Females cannot be skin tested if in heat, pregnant or in false pregnancy.
2. The pet's chest will be clipped. Please plan accordingly if the pet is to participate in a show.
3. If the pet's allergy is seasonal, which means it is strictly limited to or worsens during spring, summer or fall, it is best to schedule testing from August to November.
4. Bring the pet fasted. Since sedation is required, please do not feed the pet at least 8 hours prior to the scheduled appointment. Drinking water is allowed.
5. Ensure that the pet is not currently on medications that may cause intradermal tests to be invalid. The following withdrawal times are recommended:

Long acting injectable steroids Depo-Medrol, triamcinolone acetonide **90 days**

Oral steroids Prednisone, prednisolone, Vanectyl-P, dexamethasone, triamcinolone etc. **30 days**

Steroidal topical skin, ear and eye medications **14 days**

Surolan, Canaural, Tresaderm, Otomax, Synotic, Topagen, Fuciderm, hydrocortisone, Cortisooth shampoo, Dermacool HC, Malacetic Wipes HC, BNPH, prednisolone etc.

Antihistamines and some tranquilizer medications **7 days**

Amitriptyline, diphenhydramine (Benadryl), hydroxyzine (Atarax), cetirizine (Reactine), chlorpheniramine (Chlor-tripolon, Novo-Pheniram), clemastine (Tavist), clomipramine (Clomicalm), acepromazine (Acevet, Atravet) etc.

Essential fatty acids **7 days**

Evening primrose oil, fish oil, Derm Caps, 3V Caps, EFA Caps, Actis Omega, Welactin, Omega-Fend etc.

Important notes: Pet owners must not discontinue any medications without consulting their family veterinarian first, in order to safely follow the suggested drug withdrawal times above.

If drug withdrawal is not possible, a dermatology consultation is still a valuable option. In many patients, we can alter the drug regimen to allow testing at a later date.

6. Do not bathe the pet for 5 days prior to the appointment.
7. The following medications do not need to be discontinued: Atopica, NSAIDS, antibiotics, antifungals, immunotherapy (allergy shots), ear cleaners, flea medications, thyroid / heart / anti-seizure medications, glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, all other medications and supplements.
8. After meeting with the owner, a thorough examination of the pet, and review of the medical history, we will present the various diagnostic options and their costs.
9. Be aware that intradermal skin testing requires that the pet stay with us for several hours.
10. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call **250-590-8445**.



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