



Allergies & Your Cat

Allergies in cats generally take on one or more of three forms; respiratory, itching (often facial, ears and sometimes feet) and digestive. Allergies can be environmental and/or food related. Sometimes reactions like itching or a runny nose only show up at specific times of the year. If a cat has itchy ears or a runny nose only in the spring, it may be a seasonal allergy to some type of pollen or mold that occurs only at that time of year. There is little to be done for mild seasonal cases, the allergy usually dissipates with the change of season. However, if the reaction is severe enough, your veterinarian may recommend medication to help control your cat's symptoms.

Food allergies can also show up as itching, sores or scabbing from the itching. Food allergies may also present as vomiting and/or stool issues. Food allergies will persist as long as the cat is consuming the offending ingredient in their food. Almost all food allergies are protein-related. If a food allergy is suspected, choose a different food that does not contain the same protein sources as the current offending food. This can be a daunting task as many foods use whole plant products like potatoes, rice, blueberries or other vegetable ingredients. All whole plant products contain proteins that can be a source of allergens. For example corn, rice and potatoes all contain about 7-8% plant protein and may be identified as the problem.

All of our Young Again foods contain only meat proteins, specifically chicken, pork and herring (fish). We do use a small amount of potato starch in several of our foods, but it is purified and does not contain any plant protein. If a cat is switched to our food and the allergy goes away, then problem solved. If the allergy persists on our food then you will have narrowed it down to chicken, pork or fish. Yeast can sometimes be an allergen, but in our experience it is a less likely culprit. If your cat is allergic to one of the previous three proteins then it would be necessary to find a single meat source food and test again.

Most people choose a canned food that is made from only one meat to see which meat source is the offending one and then offer foods without that meat source. Each food item should be tested for two weeks, based on the recommendation of your veterinarian. If a single meat source in a canned food is offered, make sure that the new diet does not contain any plant material. It is also likely that more than one type of protein will be involved in the allergy.

Mild food allergies usually produce skin and ear irritation and can have many levels of severity. However, severe food allergies usually cause vomiting and sometimes diarrhea. Vomiting is usually the first symptom observed. Almost always the cat will vomit more than an hour after eating a food and the vomit will usually be liquid or syrupy and smell like gastric juices. The liquid nature is because it had already begun the digestive process. Diarrhea is also a possible symptom. Diarrhea is liquid stool, stool that is the consistency of soft serve ice cream is not diarrhea. Soft stool can have many causes. Please see our section on Free-Choice Feeding.

Generally, if a cat is suffering from vomiting and diarrhea related to food allergies, it will become more frequent over the next few days until the cat refuses to eat any more food. It will become necessary to find another food with a different protein source and try again. There is seldom a medication that will be effective with this level of a food allergy.

Not all vomiting is allergy related. Cats will often vomit as a result of a hair ball or a possible intestinal blockage. If a cat continues to vomit when given food or the vomiting came on suddenly and severely, then a blockage is likely and you should see your veterinarian immediately.

A cat that brings up whole food (in a tube that looks like cat food) is regurgitating food from the esophagus, this is often caused from eating too quickly or too much food

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at one time. This is not the same as vomiting (from the stomach). A hairball is often another possible cause for regurgitation. Regurgitation can also occur from poor functioning of the esophagus muscles. In some cases, regurgitation can be corrected by feeding a cat with the food bowl raised up about six to eight inches off the floor, allowing gravity to assist in swallowing.

Overconsumption of food may also result in soft stool with the consistency of soft serve ice cream. If a cat fills her stomach completely, the food will moisten and start to swell in 15 to 20 minutes. The swelling will make your cat feel too full and she will toss some back up to relieve the pressure. This is not harmful but should be avoided,

if possible. A cat that has a hairball taking up space in the stomach may always be hungry and may try to eat more than her stomach can hold, again producing pressure. The main reason a cat will overeat is competition from other cats or her bowl may look like it is becoming empty. She will try to eat as much as possible before it is all gone. Please read our section on Free-Choice Feeding for a detailed explanation and solution.

Allergies are complicated. If you have questions, please contact us and we can discuss your cat's specific case. Always work with your veterinarian for assistance with any abnormalities or changes to your cat's eating habits and digestion.



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