



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 scratching. 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 contains a different protein from 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 contain about 7-8% plant protein and may be identified as the problem.

Young Again foods contain only meat proteins, specifically chicken, pork and herring (fish). Our Mature diets do not contain fish and our LID Mature food uses only hydrolyzed pork as its protein source. There is a small amount of potato starch in our 50/22 cat food and our Mature Health, but the starch is purified and does not contain any plant protein. If the allergy persists on our food, you have likely narrowed it down to the protein source found in the diet you chose. 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.

Hydrolyzed animal protein is your best choice for a cat with allergies. Proteins are made up of long chain molecules and the hydroxylation process breaks those long chains into very short chains. When the chain is less than 10,000 Daltons, the protein is no longer recognized by the body as an offending protein and will not likely cause an allergic reaction. Our LID Zero Mature Health formula has been designed for cats with allergies, diabetes and kidney disease.

Most people choose a canned food made from one meat source to find out which is the offending protein, then offer foods without that meat source. Each food item should be tested for up to 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. However, severe food allergies can cause vomiting and diarrhea. Vomiting is typically 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 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 hairball or a possible intestinal blockage. If a cat continues to vomit when given food or the vomiting

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came on suddenly and severely, a blockage is likely. 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 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 can also result in vomiting and 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.

Many cats overeat due to 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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