

Atopy in Dogs

General Information

Atopy is an intensely itchy skin condition caused primarily by inhaled allergens, such as molds, pollens, and dust. Occasionally, atopy results from allergens that are absorbed through the skin or eaten. Dogs with atopy are genetically predisposed to the condition; and certain breeds, such as Schnauzers, Irish Setters, Boston Terriers, Scottish Terriers, West Highland White Terriers, Cairn Terriers and Wire-Haired Terriers, are more commonly affected than other breeds. Female dogs are more likely to be affected than males. Atopy usually first occurs at 1 to 3 years of age.

Atopy may be seasonal or nonseasonal, but most dogs with atopy eventually have nonseasonal signs. About 75% of atopic dogs first develop signs from spring to fall.

Itching is the main sign of atopy. Chewing, scratching and bacterial infection damage the skin. The face, feet and abdomen are usually the first areas affected. Besides skin problems, other signs, such as a runny nose, asthma, cataracts, and urinary and gastrointestinal disorders, occasionally occur.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Skin and blood tests are used to identify the cause of the allergy. The doctor will advise you if either of these types of tests is necessary.
2. Keeping your dog away from the cause of the allergy is not always practical or possible. When the cause is known and avoidance is possible, this is the best means of atopy control.
3. Treatment with anti-inflammatory drugs is often the most effective means of controlling atopy. In some dogs, however, these drugs become less effective as time passes and may cause undesirable side effects.
4. Desensitizing injections ("allergy shots") may help if avoidance or drug therapy is ineffective. Desensitization, however, is not always effective; continued treatment is usually necessary.
5. Regular bathing and grooming frequently help control atopy.
6. Treatment recommended for your dog is _____

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your dog's discomfort is not relieved.
- Your dog's signs change.
- Your dog's general health worsens.
- Your dog's condition spreads.