

## IS ORAL ALLERGY THERAPY RIGHT FOR YOUR PET?

Visit our website library at [www.bestfriendsvet.com](http://www.bestfriendsvet.com) for information on allergies in pets, or view our allergy video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUQGPhQ-sSU>

There are two simple ways to determine if your pet has allergies:

1. History/Environment/Symptoms/Response to allergy treatment:  
Some of the symptoms associated with allergies include itchy feet, itchy ears, inflammation of the skin, persistent scratching, chewing and face rubbing. Some pets lose hair and may experience rashes. There are other causes of these symptoms besides allergies. If an itchy pet has these common symptoms and responds to allergy treatment then allergy is the diagnosis.
2. Blood or skin testing (at your veterinarians office):  
Skin testing is only done by dermatology specialists. More commonly, your veterinarian will take blood serum and send it to be tested for a variety of inhalant allergens (substances that trigger the allergic reaction) such as tree or weed pollens, grasses, fungus (molds and mildews) and house dust mites, looking at common allergens that are specific to the region in which you live. Testing is more expensive than medication trials, so we are usually pretty certain a pet has allergies before we do this testing, based on symptoms and response to allergy medications.

### What is oral allergy treatment? Sublingual Immunotherapy (SLIT)

Based on allergy test results, we can prescribe medication to interfere with the allergens that your pet is sensitive to. Until now, the only way to treat a pet's allergy was through allergy injections. Some pets cannot tolerate or don't respond well to allergy injections. Oral allergy treatment is an easy, effective alternative for treating your pet's allergic condition. This therapy has been successfully used in humans for the past 20 years in Europe but is new to us in the U.S.

You'll love the way it is given – a few drops or a quick spray into the side of the mouth or under your pet's tongue. Over time your pet will build up a specific immune tolerance to the allergens that trigger his or her allergic reaction.

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## **What are the advantages?**

Sublingual Immunotherapy (SLIT) is an alternative yet practical emerging therapy for pets. An independent, two-year study funded by Nelco Vet and conducted by a leading veterinary medical university showed clinical improvement consistent with traditional subcutaneous immunotherapy (allergy injections). Oral allergy treatment is painless and easy to administer. It is not stressful or traumatizing to you or your pet.

## **How often do I treat my pet and what do I need to do?**

For most pets, oral immunotherapy is effective when given daily. The following is the protocol for the allergen spray provided by the company we are currently using. There are several different companies formulating SLIT therapy now and each is a little bit different. Some provide allergen in drops instead of spray and the dosing protocols may vary a bit. Be sure to read and follow the directions that come with your pet's allergen when it arrives.

Beginning with a starter dose vial, three (3) sprays into side of mouth or under the tongue are given once per day for four weeks. Remember, we are gradually increasing your pet's immune tolerance, so it takes several weeks to see a response to treatment. After the build-up period, you will switch to maintenance dose vials. You will then give three (3) sprays into side of mouth or under the tongue, once per day for 6 days/week. These vials should last approximately 8 months.

Allergen should be kept in the refrigerator. Hold the vial upright while dispensing the spray. It is important to avoid food/drink for 10-15 minutes before and after the dose in order to better aid absorption.

Try not to miss a daily dose. In the event a dose is not given for any reason simply resume therapy and continue with the usual dose. Never double or triple the recommended amount to "catch up!"

## **What are the possible side effects to my pet?**

Adverse reactions to oral allergenic extracts are extremely rare. Side effects would include facial swelling, redness, pawing at the face (due to itching and tingling of the mouth), excessive drooling, sneezing and panting. If side effects occur, a reduction in the amount of spray given is usually all that is required to solve the problem. Observations and any side effects should be noted and reported to your veterinarian.

## **Can my pet still take other allergy medications while taking Allergen?**

Antihistamines, fatty acids, Atopica and Apoquel can all be given along with the allergen spray if needed. Steroids should be avoided, however.