

# TRANSITIONING FROM A HYDROLYZED PROTEIN DIET TO A LIMITED ANTIGEN DIET



If we have done a hydrolyzed diet trial for your dog with food allergies and he or she is now doing well, it's time to decide what to feed long term. It's expensive to feed a hydrolyzed diet food forever, so if we can achieve the same effect with something less costly it's nice. We want to introduce food items one at a time to try to determine what your dog is allergic to. Food allergies are usually to the major protein ingredients, so we generally start with common meat proteins.

You would give a small amount of a single meat daily for a couple of weeks, in addition to the hydrolyzed diet. If no symptoms recur within the two week period, then that food ingredient is safe. Then we go on to try another type of meat for another two weeks, and so on. If vomiting, diarrhea or itching occur, we would go back to just the hydrolyzed diet until things settle down again before moving on to the next test. We usually start with chicken because that's the most common food allergy, mostly because it's the most common meat used in pet food. Beef is usually the next one, followed by cheese, soy or any other animal products that have been fed in the past. Once we identify the food items he or she reacts to we would try to choose a diet that does not contain those.

That can be difficult if you decide to try an over-the-counter diet. 40% of OTC diets contain proteins not listed on the label. It's quite common for ingredients to mingle when the food is manufactured. For example, the bale of beef meat contains some pork, or the equipment doesn't get cleaned between batches of food, so the new batch of salmon and rice gets contaminated by the previous chicken or soy that's stuck on the mixer blades. Another example would be that a food doesn't have beef on the label but the calcium source used in the diet is beef bones.

The better alternative to an OTC diet would be to try a prescription diet that contains a novel protein - a meat your pet has never eaten before and thus should not be allergic to. We have several choices, such as rabbit, venison, egg or duck. Those diets are usually a little less expensive than hydrolyzed ones. Manufacturers of prescription diets have much better quality control, so you don't have those contamination issues.

These protein trials take some times and patience. We will keep tabs on you so we can coach you through any problems. Give us a call if you have questions!

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