

# Allergies (Food)

## What is it?

An allergy is an abnormal immune response to a substance. The dog's immune system ramps up when exposed to the "irritant". Allergies are usually classified as environmental (inhalant) or food related (ingestion). Food Allergies are not as common as environmental allergies.



## What causes it?

Most of our environment and food is tolerated by the general population. But the immune system is very complicated, and can start to develop antibodies to something generally considered safe. Enough of an immune response, and you have an allergy. Food allergies can occur at any time in the dog's life.

## Signs & Symptoms

Itching (face, ears, front legs and abdomen) and chewing of certain areas (especially feet). Red eyes and runny noses are possible, as is a history of frequent ear infections. Possible gastrointestinal symptoms, such as diarrhea.

### How is it diagnosed?

There is no laboratory test to diagnose a food allergy. Blood panels and skin tests can show you that the dog has an immune response to, but they're not considered diagnostic. The true test for food allergies is an elimination diet

## Treatment

The dog must be fed a limited diet with completely novel ingredients- the dog must never have eaten any ingredient in any form. 12 weeks symptom-free, and those foods are considered safe. One can then introduce other ingredients one by one, carefully noting which provoke an immune response. Alternatively, you can choose a commercial food with hydrolyzed proteins.

The most common food allergies for dogs are: beef, chicken, eggs, corn, wheat, soy, and milk.

Once the offending foods are discovered, treatment consists of complete avoidance of those ingredients.

Food allergy identification is a time consuming process. Diagnosis and treatment becomes significantly more difficult if the dog has environmental allergies as well as a food allergy.

## Prognosis:

Prognosis is excellent, provided the allergens are avoided. There is no way to prevent allergies

## More Information:

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/dog-owners/skin-disorders-of-dogs/allergies-in-dogs#v39180074>

*This information is not meant to be a substitute for veterinary care.  
Always follow the instructions provided by your veterinarian.*

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