

Skin Problems in Cats

Overview

- Does your cat have a problem with their skin or fur?
- This page is a guide to some of the most common skin conditions in cats; follow the links below for more information on a particular symptom or condition.
- Always book an appointment with your vet if you notice something wrong with your cat's skin.

Symptoms

Skin problems often cause symptoms such as:

- [Itchiness](#)
- [Rashes, redness, scabs and bumps](#)
- [Wounds and open sores](#)
- [Alopecia \(fur loss\)](#)
- [Dry skin and dandruff](#)

Fleas



Fleas cause itchy skin and often lead to overgrooming. They tend to cause most problems around the face, neck and lower back. If your cat has fleas, it's unlikely you will spot any, but likely that you will find flea dirt in their fur (see image).

[Read more about fleas in cats](#)

Flea allergy



If your cat is allergic to fleas, they will have an extreme reaction each time they're bitten. It's likely that their skin will become intensely itchy, and that they will develop a rash around their head, neck and lower back.

[Read more about flea allergies in cats](#)

Eosinophilic skin disease



Eosinophilic skin disease is a type of allergic reaction that causes patches of raised, red, swollen skin. Lesions are most common on the back of the thigh, neck, upper lip, and chin. There are three unique types of eosinophilic skin disease: plaques, ulcers and granulomas.

[Read more about flea eosinophilic skin disease](#)

Infections



Skin infections can be caused by bacteria, and/ or yeasts. A skin infection usually causes the skin to become smelly, weepy and red.

Skin allergies



If your cat is allergic to something they encounter regularly, they may develop red, itchy skin. This often leads to overgrooming and alopecia (fur loss).

[Read more about skin allergies in cats](#)

Ringworm



Ringworm is a fungal skin infection that causes patches of raised or itchy, crusty skin. Ringworm patches can be circular or irregular.

[Read more about ringworm in cats](#)

Mites and lice



Mites and lice are quite rare in cats, (with the exception of ear mites that are common in kittens). However, when mites and lice do cause problems, they tend to cause itchy, dry crusty patches of skin that spread over the whole body.

[Read more about mites and lice in cats](#)

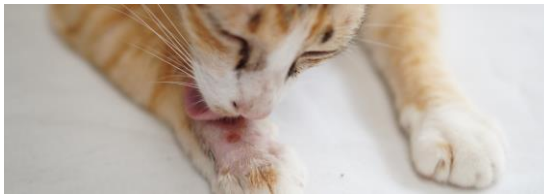
Severe allergic reactions



Severe allergic reactions are usually very obvious. They tend to cause significant swelling that starts around the ears, eyes, nose and mouth.

[Read more about severe allergic reactions in cats](#)

Injuries



[Wounds and injuries](#) such as [cat bite abscesses](#) are often painful and become infected.

[Read more about wounds and injuries](#)

When to contact your vet

Always contact your vet if your cat has symptoms of a skin problem. Skin conditions are often uncomfortable and left untreated, can get worse and become more difficult to treat.

[Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?](#)

What will happen at the appointment

Your vet will examine your cat and ask you about their symptoms. To begin with, they will rule out some of the most common causes (i.e. fleas), but if your cat doesn't improve with treatment, they may suggest tests such as:

- A food exclusion diet
- Skin scrapes
- Hair plucks
- Skin swabs
- Blood tests

Treatment

As you would expect the treatment your cat needs will depend on the condition they are diagnosed with. Some conditions are simple to treat (such as fleas), but others (such as eosinophilic dermatitis) can be more challenging, require ongoing medication and lifestyle management. Fortunately, with the right treatment, most skin conditions can be managed successfully.

Home remedies and prevention

There are many different things you can do at home to keep your cat's skin healthy:

- **[Treat for fleas](#)** - it's important to protect your cat from fleas by keeping them up to date with regular flea treatments (most treatments are used monthly but this will depend on the product you use).
- **Check your cat regularly** - it's important to check your cat's fur and skin regularly. Keep an eye out for any changes including sore patches, scabs and dandruff.
- **Diet** - feed your cat a diet that suits them and gives them a shiny coat. If your pet has sensitive skin, they may benefit from a hypoallergenic diet - speak to your vet for more information.
- **Skin supplements** - skin supplements can help in some cases of dry, flaky skin. Use a cat-specific supplement and speak to your vet if you're unsure which brand to use.
- **Creams and lotions** - it's not advisable to use any creams or lotions on your cat until you know what is causing their skin problem.
- **Prevent self-trauma** - if your cat is making their skin red or sore by scratching, nibbling or excessively licking, you will need to put a [buster collar](#) on them until you see your vet. **A buster collar should only ever be a short-term solution before you speak to your vet.**

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