

# Itchy skin in cats

## Overview

Scratching is completely normal behaviour - all cats scratch every now and again. However, always book an appointment with your vet if your cat appears itchier than normal, itchy skin causes a lot of discomfort and shouldn't be ignored.

Fleas are a very common cause of itchy skin but there are also lots of other causes. Your vet will be able to investigate what the cause is and provide a suitable treatment.

## Signs of itchy skin in cats

Some of the signs of being itchy include:

- Scratching (more than 4-5 times a day and/or for more than a few seconds at a time)
- Licking or nibbling themselves a lot
- Red or sore skin, or a rash
- Coat colour change - usually a brown or pink tinge due to excessive licking
- Bald patches (alopecia) or develop a thin, patchy coat
- Miliary dermatitis - bumpy or scabby skin usually felt when you stroke your cat (see picture below)
- Always scratching or licking the same part of their body
- Pain when scratching e.g. flinching when scratching
- Enjoying strokes and scratches more than usual, sometimes cats will lick the air when they are stoked if they are very itchy.

Beware, some cats will only scratch or lick in private! Keep an eye out for the symptoms listed above to make sure you spot any secret scratching.



*THIS CAT HAS 'MILIARY DERMATITIS' - HER OWNER FELT BUMPS WHEN STROKING HER.*

## Causes of itchy skin in cats

- Fleas
- Allergic skin disease (atopy)
- Food allergy
- Bacterial skin infection
- Fungal skin infection (e.g. Malassezia or Ring Worm)
- Mites or Lice
- Immune system problems affecting the skin
- Medication reaction
- Certain skin lumps

## When to contact your vet

Itchy skin can be very uncomfortable so shouldn't be ignored. Contact your vet if you notice any of the symptoms above.

Some conditions e.g. infections or fleas are very easy to treat.

Treating long-term conditions such as allergies, can be a bit more challenging and it can take a long time to start seeing progress. However, once you and your vet get on top of the problem you will notice a huge improvement in your cat's wellbeing.

**You know your cat best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.**

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