

## Severe allergic reactions in dogs

### Overview

Just like people, it is possible for a dog to have an allergic reaction to something such as a bee sting, a medication, or a vaccine.

Most allergic reactions improve quickly with treatment from your vet, but occasionally they can be life threatening. Serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can be deadly and require a rapid response.

#### Emergency

Contact your vet immediately if your dog begins to show signs of an allergic reaction.



*This dog is having an allergic reaction after a bee sting.*

This article does not cover chronic allergies such as food allergies, flea allergies or pollen allergies (atopic dermatitis).

Separate articles with information on these conditions are available ([www.pdsa.org.uk/phh](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/phh)).

## When to contact your vet

### Emergency

**Contact your vet immediately if your dog begins to show signs of an allergic reaction.**

Symptoms of an allergic reaction (listed below) can start suddenly and without warning. A dog showing symptoms of a severe allergic reaction needs emergency, lifesaving veterinary treatment.

**You know your dog best. Contact your vet if you're concerned.**

## Symptoms

- Skin rash, swellings or hives (bumps)
- Swollen face (or swelling elsewhere on the body)
- Itchy skin

A severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may also cause:

- Breathing difficulties
- Cold ears, legs and feet
- A pounding heart beat
- Vomiting and / or diarrhoea
- Collapse
- Coma or death

Symptoms vary depending on what your dog has reacted to and how severe their reaction is. Anaphylaxis is the same kind

of life-threatening reaction that humans with peanut allergies suffer.

## Causes

Allergic reactions are caused by the body overreacting to something it's sensitive to. A first reaction is usually quite mild, but each reaction after that is likely to get worse. Occasionally a first reaction is severe and happens without warning.

Common allergies include:

- Medicines (such as vaccines, flea medicines and antibiotics)
- Bee stings, wasp stings and insect bites
- Chemicals (cleaners and air fresheners)
- Plants (nettles)

However, it's possible for a dog to be allergic to just about anything

## Treatment

Treatment depends on how severe the reaction is. If your dog has a mild reaction, they're likely to be discharged after being given medication to reduce swelling and settle their symptoms.

If your dog has a more severe reaction, it's likely they'll be admitted into the veterinary hospital for intensive treatment. This could include a drip to give fluids, medication directly into the vein and, if your dog is having trouble breathing, they may need a tube placed into their windpipe to supply oxygen.

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