

Itchy Skin

Frequent scratching may indicate fleas, allergies or fungal infection. Consult your veterinarian for help.

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Itchy skin may be driving you and your cat crazy. Cats can scratch and lick and pull out large areas of their coats, developing red patches and scabs. Unfortunately, almost all causes of dermatitis and itchiness look the same when examined. The most common itchy problem in cats is flea infestation and secondary flea bite allergy dermatitis. Infectious and allergic causes are also possible. To determine the cause of dermatitis, fungal testing and skin scrapings may be needed.

Fungal infections, such as ringworm and certain types of mange, can cause itchy skin and be contagious to humans and other pets. If your cat has more than an occasional itch, seek veterinary attention. Let your veterinarian know if you or any other pets in the household are having problems.

Cats can be allergic to just about anything, making diagnosis difficult. Your veterinarian can perform skin tests to check for inhaled and contact allergies. To diagnose a food allergy, your cat may be placed on a hypoallergenic diet.

Not all itchy skin problems can be cured. A management plan may be needed to keep your cat comfortable and control the problem. Treatments for skin diseases include flea control, medicated shampoos, oral drugs and special diets.