

Allergic Reactions/Anaphylaxis

The most common cause of allergies is an insect bite such as a bee sting or bug bite. However, many times we cannot completely determine the underlying trigger. Signs of allergic reactions in dogs include facial swelling, hives, and itching. Hives can be challenging to see on your pet. Typically, you might notice that their fur is standing up in odd patches and this could be due to hives.

More severe allergic reactions, called anaphylaxis, can also include vomiting, diarrhea, pale gums, and collapse. This can be a life-threatening situation and immediate medical help is needed.

Most dogs respond rapidly to an injection of Benadryl for allergic reactions. Some dogs also require a short course of steroids, particularly if there is severe swelling. Unlike in people, they rarely have trouble breathing but prompt medical intervention is recommended. It is important to recognize that if your pet has had an allergic reaction, then they are at risk of a more severe reaction with repeat exposure to the allergen again in the future.

Anaphylaxis causes a profound inflammatory effect in the body. Some of these dogs will NOT have obvious facial swelling or hives and just have sudden vomiting and collapse. Anaphylaxis can lead to abnormalities in coagulation, liver damage, and severe gastrointestinal damage leading to vomiting and diarrhea. These changes are usually reversible once the inflammation has resolved.

It is important to recognize that if your pet has had an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis then they are at risk of an even more severe reaction if they are exposed to the allergen again in the future. In some rare instances, an EpiPen may be sent home for future use and when available in the correct size for your pet.