



TOPICAL TIPS TO STOP THE ITCH BEFORE YOUR PET BECOMES A SCRATCHING MESS.

As a child your mother might have told you to stop scratching your mosquito bite as it would only make it worse. It all comes down to the body's histamine response.

It's a vicious cycle as scratching irritates mast cells, which produce histamine during inflammatory and allergic reactions; scratching compounds the problem by further intensifying the itch. If we compare humans and dogs we'll find that

dogs have ten times as many mast cells in their skin as we do. That means that dogs experience a lot more itching with any kind of allergic response.

Additionally, the histamine-producing mast cells are spread all over a dog's body.

It's too bad that dogs aren't very amenable to the same kind of advice our mothers used to give us. They scratch and then scratch more and more and more.

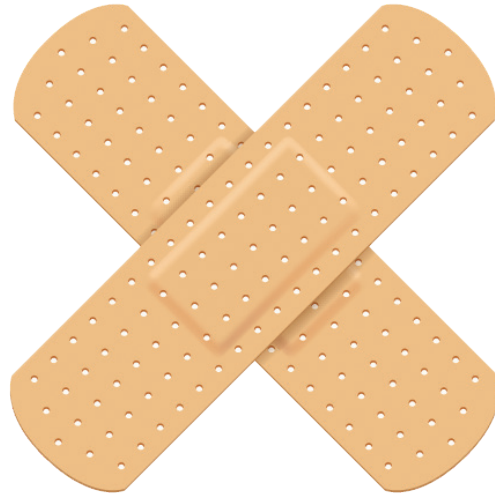
A good strategy is to apply a remedy that will stop the itch quickly and prevent the escalation of histamine in the tissues.

The good news is that there are many readily available natural topical products that will do the job well.

In fact, you may have many of these itch fixes in your home. When you nip the itch in the bud, the problem is most likely to get resolved unless it's systemic.

The Itch

FIX



Since beginning her holistically oriented veterinary practice over 30 years ago, Deva Khalsa VMD has been incorporating homeopathy, acupuncture, Chinese herbs, nutritional advice and allergy elimination techniques such as NAET and JMT into her approach. Today her work is a blend of sophisticated holistic techniques and traditional veterinary medicine designed to best enhance the natural strengths and attributes of her patient. She is available for worldwide consults by contacting her online at doctordeva.com

For our purposes today, I'll suggest some tried and true common remedies to address acute causes of itching such as insect bites, surface irritation (such as sidewalk salt in winter) or an abrasion or wound.

CALENDULA OFFICINALIS

This herb is a favorite first aid treatment among herbalists, and for good reason. It has an almost magical effect in healing wounds. Calendula has a more powerful

ability to hinder bacteria than many antibiotics. Importantly, it also has the benefit of having an anti-inflammatory effect while it promotes new healthy cell growth. It also helps eliminate fungal infection.

The Romans coined the name calendula to reflect the herb's blooming schedule as it would flower on the calends, or new moon, of every month. Officinalis refers to its official medicinal value. Calendula tincture diluted with water from 1:5 to 1:10 is ef-

fective and dependable for the treatment of itchy spots and it can stop a hot spot in a jiff. You can buy the tincture of calendula from a health food store or an online herbal or homeopathic supply store. After diluting and mixing the tincture, apply it with a spray bottle or just pour some on the area and rub it in.

Steep dried calendula petals to make your own tincture. Here's how to do it: Pour a cup of boiling water onto five tablespoons

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of calendula petals and steep for 15 minutes. This tincture does not have to be diluted the way a purchased tincture does.

BAKING SODA

Baking soda can work wonders! It has a soothing effect due to its anti-inflammatory properties. Plus, it acts as an acid neutralizer and creates a more basic pH that truly helps to relieve itching. It's easy and it's very effective.

Mix one tablespoon of baking soda with a little water to make a paste. Place the paste on the areas that are itchy or red-dened. Leave the paste on for a few hours. Then wash it off. You can also make a baking soda spray by mixing two tablespoons of baking soda with eight ounces of water. Place in a spray bottle and use when necessary. Shake before using.

I have found the paste solution very helpful with dogs who have itchy, irritated feet. Put the paste between their toes and on the tops of their feet. Baking soda is safe if it dries and falls off on your carpet and can be vacuumed up easily.

ALOE VERA

There's a real difference between the gel you can buy in the store and the live plant. The live plant has important enzymes that last for less than three days in the refrigerator. Those special enzymes are not present in bottled gel. Importantly, these

enzymes are incredibly powerful and work rapidly to heal itchy skin.

Each aloe leaf contains a jelly-like substance, which rapidly regenerates damaged tissue. This plant increases the rate of healing in the cellular matrix and decreases inflammation. It also has antibiotic and coagulating agents in it.

You can find aloe plants at plant nurseries; they need little care to maintain in your home. Place a terra cotta pot with an aloe vera plant on your window ledge and it will always be available to you.

Fresh aloe gel can be obtained by splitting the leaf. Use the hard cuticle of the leaf to apply the green tinged clear jelly that's inside the leaf to itchy areas.

It can also be used for wounds, fungal infections and insect bites. If you cut a leaf and use part of it, store the rest of it in the refrigerator. Again, after the leaf is cut, the ingredients will remain active for less than three days.

WITCH HAZEL

Witch hazel, also known as winter-bloom or spotted alder, is a flowering shrub common in North America. The leaves, bark and twigs of witch hazel are high in tannins. Tannins are found in any natural astringent because of their ability to tighten, dry and harden tissues. The witch hazel liquid, easily purchased for just a

few dollars at any drugstore, is actually a steam distillation of the bark, leaves and twigs of the shrub itself.

When applied directly to the skin, witch hazel helps reduce swelling, repair broken skin and also fights bacteria.

Some wonderful things about witch hazel are that it's 100 percent natural, smells fresh and doesn't stain furniture or carpets when you apply it to your dog.

Simply soak a cloth or cotton ball with witch hazel and rub it on your dog's skin. Witch hazel works awesomely for soothing itchy skin. It's also great for itchy paws. You can put some in a plastic bowl and dip your dog's feet in it and then pat dry.

GRINDELIA ROBUSTA AND GRINDELIA SQUARROSA

The administration of this particular herb lies within the realm of homeopathy. You won't find this in the local drug store or health food store.

Grindelia tincture is made from the leaves and flowers of the *Asteraceae* (*Compositae*) family that grow on the Pacific coast and inland in the mountains.

The heads of the flowers get covered with a viscid balsamic secretion and thus have been called gumweed or rosin-weed. The tincture of grindelia, after being diluted 1:10 with water, can be a very effective treatment for itching. You can order this



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tincture from a homeopathic supply store and dilute it before use.

Once again, you can pour the mixture on the itchy area, soak a cotton ball and apply it, or place the mixture in a spray bottle and spray the area. Apply as frequently as needed to the area and watch the progress.

The homeopathic remedy Grindelia can also be used orally in a 6X or 6C potency.

Give a few pellets or granules orally (you can tip them into your dog's cheek) and allow them to dissolve in his mouth. Homeopathic remedies should never be mixed into or given with food.

ZYMOX

I personally love Zymox LP3 enzymatic products for ear infections and itch relief. Only the mildest plant surfactants are used and the enzymes have anti-inflammatory properties that calm the skin.

The LP3 enzyme system reacts with the infectious pus and debris with enzymatic antimicrobial properties. The bioactive enzymes are safe, effective and non-toxic.

Make sure you buy the Zymox without hydrocortisone. The only time I would

ever use Zymox with hydrocortisone is if your dog's ears get a really wicked flare-up. If that happens and you feel you need to use it for the sake of your dog's comfort, do so very sparingly for a few doses, then go right back to the non-hydrocortisone product for routine use.

I've found Zymox very effective with chronic ear infections that no conventional medication has seemed to help. Additionally, these products are very effective against chronic malassezia (fungal) infection in dogs.

While not every one of these remedies will work perfectly on every dog, there's a very good chance that most of them will work on most dogs. If one solution isn't effective, don't hesitate to move to another one.

You probably have some baking soda at home already, and it's easy to find the other products so you can stock up.

If your dog tends to get itchy spots in the summer, I would suggest having some of these solutions on hand and ready to go in your first aid kit. Whatever's itching him, the trick is to nip it in the bud. 🍋

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