

HOW ACUPRESSURE HELPS DOGS WITH SKIN ALLERGIES

Traditional Chinese Medicine regards skin allergies as a breakdown in the immune system. Used in conjunction with other therapies, an immune-supporting acupressure session can help calm your dog's skin reactions.

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis

Excessive scratching, itching, licking, chewing and rubbing are all tell-tale signs of a dog with skin allergies. There are lots of non-toxic ways to help ease his itching and discomfort — including acupressure, which when used in combination with other alternative modalities can be very effective, and is easily done at home.

ALLERGENS AND IRRITANTS ABOUND

Dogs can experience allergic reactions to a long list of irritants, such as grass, trees, flowers, pollens, molds, dust mites, insect bites, animal dander, foods (especially those with preservatives and coloring), household cleaners, grooming products, snow-melt chemicals, medications, fertilizers and more. Stress can also lead to obsessive licking and chewing, resulting in inflamed skin irritation.

Skin rashes and inflammation most commonly appear on the dog's ears, wrists, hocks, groin, under his legs, around his eyes, and between the digits on his paws. Watch for any abnormal changes in your dog's skin such as discoloration, rash-like bumps, bald spots, scaling, hot spots and flakiness.

ALLERGIES FROM A TCM PERSPECTIVE

By combining your veterinarian's recommendations (see sidebar at right) with Traditional Chinese Medicine modalities, such as acupressure, you can manage your dog's uncomfortable allergic reactions.



From an ancient Chinese medicine perspective, allergies represent a breakdown in the immune system. That is, the dog's body is not able to cope with the substance triggering the reaction because his immune system is not strong enough to resist it. When the natural internal balance that supports the immune system is compromised by external environmental triggers or allergens, the dog may experience an allergic reaction. Thus, it is extremely important to build and strengthen your dog's immune system while also resolving the current pathogenic issue that is compromising his immunity.

Acupuncture and Chinese herbs can only be administered by a veterinarian qualified in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) because acupuncture needles are invasive and herbs are ingested. Certain Chinese herbal formulas are known to address the issues that can cause allergic reactions; they work from the inside out, while acupuncture works from the outside in.

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TAKING AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO ALLERGIES

No matter what the cause, or where or how the skin reaction appears, an allergic dog can be absolutely miserable. The best way to help him is to use an integrative approach.

First, have your dog checked by an integrative or holistic veterinarian to be sure his skin problem is an allergic reaction and not anything else. Your vet will be able to help you sort out the possible irritant(s) to which your dog's body is reacting. The solution may be as simple as a food change, and/or introducing or increasing Omega fatty acids, zinc, and/or vitamins A, E and biotin (a form of B vitamin) into his diet. These natural supplements serve as a first line of defense against skin issues. If your dog's skin is damaged, the vet will most likely also provide a topical to address potential bacterial infection.

If the natural supplement approach isn't able to address your dog's painful and irritating skin reaction, your vet may resort to prescribing an antihistamine to quickly calm the allergic reaction. Often suggested for temporary relief are oatmeal soaks and shampoos, and other natural skin-calming agents.

2 WAYS TO DO ACUPRESSURE

- 1. Thumb technique** – With one hand placed in a comfortable and relaxed position on your dog, place the thumb of your other hand perpendicular to the acupoint. Apply about ¼ pound or less of pressure, depending on the size of your dog.

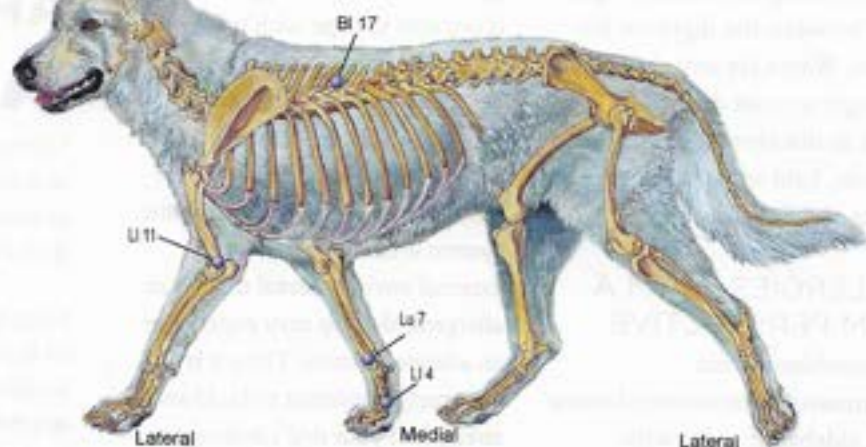


- 2. Two-finger technique** – This technique is often more applicable to smaller dogs. As with the thumb technique, place one hand comfortably on your dog. Place your middle finger on top of your index finger, and apply a pound or less of pressure on the acupoint.



Whichever technique you use, keep your thumb or fingers on the acupoint for a slow count of 30, or until your dog expresses an energy release such as yawning, stretching, licking, passing air or falling asleep. If at any time he seems distressed, or if a particular point is painful, either move on to the next one or stop and try again another time.

Acupressure for Skin Allergies



Point	Location
Lu 7	Located above the styloid process, 1.5 cun above the crease of the wrist.
LI 4	Between the first (dewclaw) and 2 nd metacarpal bones, on the medial side of the 2 nd metacarpal.
LI 11	At the lateral aspect of thoracic limb, at the lateral end of the cubital crease. Find by flexing the elbow.
Bl 17	Found 1.5 inches lateral the caudal border of the 7 th thoracic vertebra.

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Acupressure also works from the outside in, and is a modality you can use at home. Adding in an acupressure session to support your dog's immune system will help with his allergies. Acupressure is non-invasive, always available, and both gentle and powerful. Like acupuncture, acupressure is based on TCM and utilizes exactly the same points.

HELP EASE ALLERGIES WITH THIS ACUPRESSURE SESSION

The following four acupressure points are known to support and strengthen the immune system, and help the canine body naturally withstand allergies:

- 1 Large Intestine 11 (LI 11)** — Enhances the immune system, reduces itching (pruritus) and benefits skin disorders.

- 2 Large Intestine 4 (LI 4)** — Used for allergic dermatological issues and benefits the immune system.

- 3 Lung 7 (Lu 7)** — Benefits skin issues, especially abdominal itching, and strengthens the immune system.

- 4 Bladder 17 (Bl 17)** — Enhances blood flow to nourish and moisten skin while building immune-stimulation.

By offering this acupressure session every third or fourth day, you can help your dog resolve a current reaction and avoid skin allergies in the future. Combine acupressure with your veterinarian's recommendations, a healthy diet, balanced lifestyle, and minimal exposure to triggering allergens, and your dog will soon feel a lot more comfortable in his own skin.