

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT?

Welcome to the **Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Center** Dermatology and Allergy Service. If you have already made an appointment, we look forward to working with you and your companion animal very soon. If you have not booked an appointment yet, but would like to do so, please call **(215) 750-7884**. Our goal is to provide the highest quality of care while meeting or exceeding all of your expectations.

We are primarily an outpatient service and perform most of the diagnostic tests during your appointment. In select cases, your companion animal may need to stay at the hospital for a few hours or return at another future scheduled time. We try to address the problems of each individual patient without compromise, which means that your appointment may take longer than what you are accustomed to at your primary veterinarian's hospital or with other services. We obtain a detailed history, perform a dermatological physical examination, provide an in-depth explanation regarding underlying causes for your pet's condition, and provide discharge directions for you regarding the use of provided medications/products.

What to bring to the appointment?

- A complete questionnaire regarding your companion animal's history (available on the Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Center web site or provided during your initial visit if you are unable to complete the form ahead of time)— you may fax the form ahead of time (215-752-3156), but we still ask that you bring the original copy.
- Previous veterinary records and/or referral forms from your primary veterinarian
- Previous laboratory results (e.g., blood work, urinalysis, imaging reports, cytology reports, biopsy reports, cultures)
- Records/proof of vaccination or reason for exemption
- Bottles of oral medication(s) that your companion animal is currently receiving or has recently received (prescribed and over-the-counter products)
- Containers of any topical creams, lotions, shampoos, etc. (prescribed and over-the-counter products)
- Food labels (if possible) or print-out with the nutritional information/ingredients
- The heartworm prevention, flea/tick prevention- containers or note the brand and if flavored

Details regarding your appointment:

- It is best to arrive 15-20 minutes before your scheduled appointment to allow for paperwork to be completed. Please plan for possible traffic.
- Please respect your pet's appointment time. If you are going to be more than 10-15 minutes late, please call. In these instances, please be aware that you may have an extended wait time as we work you in, or you may need to reschedule.
- Initial examination appointments are scheduled for 60 minute time slots.
- Re-examination appointments and "Allergen start-up Exams" are scheduled for 30 minutes, and suture removal appointments are 15 minute time slots (technician appointments).
- While we will do everything possible to get you in-and-out in a timely fashion, we provide every patient with individual and personalized care, which may in turn lead to slightly longer appointments and/or wait times (including procedures).
- To be on the safe side, we recommend that you allow 2 hours for your appointment.
- Procedures that will take longer than an hour will likely be performed in the late morning or early afternoon and/or at a pre-scheduled time (e.g., skin testing, ear flushes, biopsies).
- Please DO NOT give your companion animal a bath for at least 7 days prior to your scheduled appointment.
- We may ask that you leave your companion animal in our care as a day case for certain procedures or treatments. Usually, your companion animal will be discharged later that afternoon or evening at a predetermined time.

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- The initial appointment includes the formulation of a plan for your companion animal—each patient has individual requirements and we cater to each patient and his/her specific needs.
- If there is the chance that sedation may be required (e.g., skin testing), please do not feed your companion animal pet at least 6-8 hours prior to your appointment (see special note for skin testing below).
- Please note all the instructions from your veterinarian, our staff and our dermatologist (e.g., if you are having a post-pill blood level checked, it is important to administer the medication as directed at the correct time so the test yields accurate results).
- The dermatology and allergy service is not a general practice service.** The service will NOT provide routine vaccinations to your companion animal. We strongly encourage at least twice a year routine examinations with your primary veterinarian.

What will this cost me?

- Fee:** There is a set fee for an initial (60 minute) appointment and a recheck (30 minute) appointment. For details regarding fees, you may ask while booking your appointment. At anytime, please feel free to ask what procedures, diagnostic test, or medications cost.
- We will work with every client on an individual basis and devise a treatment plan that is best for your companion animal and affordable for you.
- Whenever possible, we will provide you with verbal or written estimates.
- We understand that management of dermatology and allergy-related conditions is chronic and may become costly. Well-managed patients usually cost less in the long run. So while it may seem costly to be rechecked, this prevents flare-ups and the need for 'starting over,' which is more costly.
- Payment in full is expected after each visit.** There are Care Credit® options available.
- Clients who have an outstanding balance or who are in collections may not be seen unless the condition is considered to be an emergency and payment for services rendered that day would be expected. There are exceptions and as mentioned above, we work with each client on an individual bases, but as a rule, there are no payment plans through the hospital.
- Insurance:** Please bring your forms with you so that we can fill them out for you to send back to your insurance company. All communication with the insurance company is your responsibility. If you forget your form, feel free to drop-off, mail, or fax the form and it will be completed and returned to YOU.
- Rebates:** In some cases, medications have mail-in rebate forms. We will provide you with these rebates. Please send-in the rebates to maximize your savings on select products.

Communication information and after hour questions/care:

- Dermatological and allergic conditions are often chronic, wax and wane, and can be quite frustrating to manage. We understand that and will do our best to provide you with prompt replies to telephone calls or e-mail inquiries.
- Please also understand that in most cases, the question/condition is not an emergency and can wait 48-72 hours for a response. If the matter is more urgent than that, we ask that you contact your veterinarian, see the emergency service, and/or have the receptionist contact the dermatologist.

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- ❑ Because the dermatology service is not in the clinic every day, please understand there may be a period of time before your call is returned. Telephone calls are generally returned on the days that the doctor is scheduled. The calls will be returned during or about an hour after the clinic hours for that day.
- ❑ In order to be efficient and be able to help everyone requesting a telephone call, please know that you will most likely speak with one of the highly trained and experienced dermatology technicians.
- ❑ **The dermatologist will be willing to speak with your primary veterinarian anytime. The dermatologist will also always be willing to speak with an active client (seen within 6 months),** but it may take a few days for the return call. Thus, we encourage you to converse with a dermatology technician who can speak with the dermatologist.
- ❑ **The dermatologist will NOT be able to speak with anyone other than the referring veterinarian or staff of the referring veterinarian prior to an appointment.** All questions for the dermatologist will be answered during the extensive 60 minute initial examination. If you have questions prior to your appointment, please direct the questions to the receptionists who will either answer your question immediately, get back to you after speaking with a member of the service, or have a dermatology technician return your call.
- ❑ **Telephone calls are a very poor substitute for a true examination.** In some cases, we will request a telephone update, but in most cases, a recheck in person is optimal (at least initially). The skin is a very complex organ and visual as well as physical examination is very important. Scheduled/requested rechecks are necessary to provide the best possible management of your companion's condition. We can ALWAYS converse with your primary veterinarian upon request.

On-line/Mail-Away pharmacies/Refills:

- ❑ The dermatology and allergy service will **NOT deal directly with on-line pharmacies.**
- ❑ The dermatology and allergy service **will provide a written prescription for you either in-person or via mail,** but the service will NOT deal directly with online pharmacies. Please allow 5-7 days for a prescription to arrive at your house via mail from the time of the request.
- ❑ When using on-line pharmacies, it is very difficult to monitor medication use and instructions as there is a risk of changes in the dose, brand, or frequency of administration without authorization. **It is also VERY TIME CONSUMING to manage all the repeated faxes and telephone calls with numerous different pharmacies.** DO NOT HAVE REQUESTS FAXED to the dermatology and allergy service (unless requested by the dermatology and allergy service).
- ❑ **The primary purpose for these pharmacies has been to provide commonly dispensed veterinary products at lower costs than local veterinary pharmacies. In theory, this is an ideal concept, but there are numerous reasons why this may not always be as good as it appears. Some of the on-line pharmacies will dispense:** (1) prescription items/medications without veterinary approval, (2) counterfeit products, (3) short-dated or expired products, (3) recalled products, and (5) products that originated from third parties (diverters) with unregulated storage and shipping conditions (e.g., excessive heat or cold or lack of refrigeration when required). While most of the reputable on-line pharmacies likely take measures to avoid such problems, these are still risks that one takes when purchasing products on-line. Pharmaceutical companies are unlikely to provide support in the event of an adverse event when products are purchased on-line and/or when products are the generic form (sometimes recommended by the doctor) of the product requested.
- ❑ **The dermatology and allergy service has purposefully set the cost for the majority of the regularly dispensed medication and products to be very competitive and in many cases less costly than on-line options.**

- ❑ **Refills** will be available **24 hours a day** so long as the dermatology and allergy service is informed 5-7 days in advance so that the prescription can be filled and made available. You may pick-up refills or these can be mailed. Orders over \$89.00 will be shipped at no fee to the client via regular ground mail. Express delivery is available for a fee. Orders under \$89.00 will be \$7.00 for regular ground mail or \$35.00 for express shipping. Exceptions may apply on a case-by-case basis. **Refills on most medications/products will NOT be provided if your companion animal has not been seen within 6 months** (some exceptions apply- e.g., diet, shampoo, etc.). Under NO circumstances will there be pharmaceutical refills (e.g., antibiotics, corticosteroids, etc.) without an exam within 12 months. If necessary, we can converse with your veterinarian to ensure that necessary medications are dispensed. The well-being of your companion is our primary concern.
- ❑ We encourage you to purchase your medications/products directly from a veterinarian. **You may feel free to obtain medications from your primary veterinarian or from the dermatology and allergy service** (often refills can be obtained through your veterinarian).
- ❑ In some cases, the dermatology and allergy service will call-in prescriptions to local pharmacies or compounding pharmacies when necessary.
- ❑ **The dermatology and allergy service is ALWAYS willing to work with your primary veterinarian. Prescriptions can be faxed or called into your veterinarian's hospital.**
- ❑ Please provide 5-7 days before you run-out of medications as the dermatology and allergy service is not available every day at the hospital.
- ❑ Allergen refills should be requested at least 7 days in advance.

Preparing for a skin allergy test:

- ❑ Since sedation is often required, we ask that you NOT FEED your companion animal at least 6-8 hours prior to your scheduled appointment (water is okay, but should be withheld an hour before the appointment).
- ❑ **STOP all of the following medications:**
 - fish oil supplements (10 days before the test)
 - injectable corticosteroids (at least 35-42 days before the test)
 - oral corticosteroids (21-28 days before the test)
 - topical corticosteroids (14-21 days before the test)-**Note:** This includes ear medications
 - antihistamines (14 days before the test, e.g., Benadryl®, Zyrtec® etc.)
 - tranquilizer medications (acepromazine) (10 days before test)
 - routine vaccinations (28 days before the test)
 - tyrosine kinase inhibitors (unknown effects on skin test)
- ❑ **You do NOT need to stop:**
 - non-steroid containing ear products, shampoos, or other topical products
 - non-steroidal inflammatory medications (e.g., Deramaxx®, Rimadyl®, etc.)
 - antibiotics (oral, topical, injectable)
 - anti-yeast medications
 - anti-seizure medications
 - heartworm prevention medications

- insecticides
- thyroid supplementation
- Cyclosporine (Atopica®)- but, a lower dose/frequency would be ideal

If you have a question, please call for further details.

Cancellation policy:

- We will do our best to contact you 48 hours prior to your appointment with a reminder call.**
- If you must cancel your appointment, we ask that you do so **at least 48 hours prior to your scheduled appointment.** This allows us to contact pet owners on our waiting list who are also in need of our services.
- If there is an unforeseen emergency, or the weather does not permit for you to make your appointment, we understand and will help you reschedule for the next available appointment.
- If you ‘no call, no show’ or cancel the same day without any reason more than two times, the dermatology and allergy service reserves the right to either:** (1) not allow you to book another appointment; (2) charge you for 50% of the fee for that missed appointment (recheck or consult); or (3) ask for a credit card to reserve the next appointment. This is obviously last resort, but there are occasional repeat offenders that prohibit the service from meeting the high demand of clients who wish to be seen in a timely fashion.