

How to conduct a limited-antigen diet trial

Your pet is exhibiting clinical signs that could be consistent with an adverse reaction to food. This adverse reaction may be a food allergy, or your pet could be intolerant to a component of its current diet. Food allergies develop over time and are usually caused by something your pet commonly eats rather than by a recently introduced food. Changing to another brand of pet food rarely helps as many ingredients are common to many pet foods. Many over the counter diets have also been found to be contaminated with additional ingredients, despite their label claim. For this reason, your veterinarian is recommending that you feed your pet one of the following diets for the next six to eight weeks:

Novel protein diet _____

(Name/manufacturer)

Hydrolyzed diet _____

(Name/manufacturer)

Home-cooked diet _____

Your pet's current weight is _____. Feed the amount indicated on the packaging for your pet's weight unless otherwise directed by your veterinarian. If your pet is gaining or losing weight, adjust the amount accordingly. Slowly introduce the new diet—mix it with your pet's current diet before switching over completely.

The following points are key to the success of this diagnostic protocol:

- This diet must be fed exclusively. No other foods or treats are allowed.
- Make sure all family members and friends know that your pet is receiving a special diet.
- If you need to use treats for rewards or training purposes, use some of this diet.
- If there are other pets in the household of the same species, they should be fed the same diet, or fed separately. Other animals should be fed separately.
- If your pet is in the habit of eating food dropped by young children in the household, keep your pet out of the room at meal times. Do not let your pet lick the plates.
- If pills are prescribed for your pet, do not hide them in anything other than the prescribed diet. If administering medication is a problem, please discuss this with your veterinarian.
- Flavored products, such as those found in monthly prophylactic heartworm tablets and other medications, toothpaste, and certain plastic toys, must also be avoided during this regimen.
- If your pet is in the habit of eating dropped food or garbage when exercised, keep it on a lead.

It may take six to eight weeks to see any improvement in your pet, especially if your veterinarian has diagnosed concurrent problems. Please don't lose hope—call your veterinarian with any questions you might have.

