

## **Feline Acne**

Feline acne is caused by comedones, or blackheads, on the cat's chin. Stress, poor grooming habits, immune suppression, and contact dermatitis can be triggers for acne. Comedones form when oils produced in the skin cannot drain properly through the sebaceous and apocrine glands. The ducts fill with oil, dead skin cells, and bacteria. The cat may scratch and rub at the raised irritated bump that forms. Hair loss and secondary skin infection may result. Other skin diseases that can be confused with feline acne include feline eosinophilic complex, demodectosis (mange), and ringworm.

Rarely, an allergic reaction to nylon or plastic food bowls may cause feline acne. It is always worth a try to switch to stainless steel bowls to see if there is improvement. A shampoo or acne medication containing 3% benzoyl peroxide is used to break down the oils that clog the comedones and kill bacteria. Oral antibiotics may be prescribed if there is secondary infection or deep dermatitis. Never use over the counter topical acne products without first consulting a veterinarian as the cat may consume the medication while grooming.

Tests that are used to rule out other skin conditions that may mimic feline acne include skin scrapings, fungal cultures, and biopsy. These diagnostics may be recommended in the case of deep dermatitis or extreme self-trauma.

Supplementation with omega fatty acids may help prevent feline acne. The anti-oxidant activity of these supplements protects the skin cells from damage that may lead to comedones. Food allergy is a possible contributor to feline acne when there are other associated symptoms present. A hypoallergenic diet food trial may be in order.

Poor grooming as a cause of acne may be a sign of underlying disease. If the cat has recently changed its grooming habits, a physical exam and blood chemistry profile should be performed.

Routine cleaning of the chin with astringent pads can help reduce breakouts in cats that are prone to feline acne.