

## Dr. Mike Paul, DVM

Mike has more than 35 years of experience in companion animal veterinary practice and is a valued member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team since 2013.

Pododermatitis is an [inflammation](#) and/or [infection](#) of the foot. It is not a specific [disease](#) but rather a descriptive [condition](#) that can result from a number of medical problems. Because the prognosis and treatment can vary greatly, depending on the underlying problem, your [veterinarian](#) will likely run a thorough [checkup](#) to locate the cause. Causes of pododermatitis may include<sup>1</sup>:

- [Allergic dermatitis](#)
- Autoimmune [skin disease](#)
- Trauma with a secondary infection (bacterial or [fungal](#))
- [Demodicosis](#)
- Neoplasia

## Symptoms of pododermatitis

The [inflammation](#) may be limited to the feet, with no other areas affected. Unfortunately, inflammation leads to redness and an itchy sensation in the feet. Your dog may start licking and/or [chewing](#) his feet, nails and even foot pads.

Excessive [licking](#) and chewing may result in secondary infections which cause even more [itch](#), as well as an abnormal odor. Other changes that may occur include:

- A generalized [swelling](#) of the feet
- Local swelling of the nodules between the toes
- Development of open and draining tracts (fistulas) with a pus-like or bloody discharge (Draining tracts, will usually lead to scar tissue formation, which makes treatment even more difficult)

## Diagnosis of pododermatitis

**Your veterinarian will usually begin with two simple tests:**

- A skin scraping to look for demodectic mange [mites](#)
- A cytology to examine for [bacteria](#) and yeast which are common secondary problems

If an allergy is suspected there may be a need for a more complete workup including allergy tests. biopsies and [surgical](#) exploration may be required too.

## Treatment of pododermatitis

Treatment of pododermatitis is variable because it really depends on the underlying cause. Without question, treatment should be as focused as possible to enhance the results and improve the prognosis for recovery. Combinations of therapy are often required.

Systemic (internal) antibiotics or antifungals can be used to treat secondary infections and may require 3-6 weeks or more of treatment. Topical agents may be used but will usually not afford much improvement on their own and will need to be combined with other drugs<sup>2</sup>.

## Prognosis of pododermatitis

Early and specific treatment will improve the likelihood of a positive outcome for your dog. Chronic inflammation that causes scarring will make the treatment more difficult and increase the likelihood of recurrence.

## Prevention of pododermatiis

Regular inspection of the feet is important. It is also helpful to shave the feet between the toes (particularly for long-haired dogs). Prompt veterinary attention is important to prevent chronic damage.

## Questions to ask your veterinarian

- My dog's feet have sores between the toes that drain pus and blood. What could it be?
- What causes draining wounds on my dogs' feet?

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*

## Resources:

1. [Rees, Christine, DVM, DACVD. "Differential Diagnoses for Canine Pododermatitis \(Proceedings\)." Dvm.360. 1 Oct. 2008. Web. 19 Jan. 2015. <http%3A%2F%2Fveterinarycalendar.dvm360.com%2Fdifferential-diagnoses-canine-](#)

[pododermatitis-proceedings%3Frel%3Dcanonical>.](#)

2. ["Pododermatitis." Dermatology for Animals. Web. 19 Jan. 2015. <http://www.dermatologyforanimals.com/faq-38/>.](#)