How to get rid of fleas



If all the advice about fleas feels overwhelming, you're not the only one. That's why I made this checklist. Take on your pets and the places they rest on the same day. Turn the sheet over for the yard and a place to record what you find.

- [ ] **Check what you're dealing with.** Part the fur and use a flea comb, especially near the neck and base of the tail. Look for live fleas or flea dirt. Itchy marks alone can have several causes. If you're unsure, keep a specimen or take a clear photo for identification.

In your home

- [ ] **Start where your pet sleeps.** Vacuum rugs, carpets, the edges along walls and the gaps under sofa cushions. Move small furniture where you can. Include the garage, basement or car if your pet regularly rests there.
- [ ] **Gather the washable things.** Wash pet blankets, removable covers and any bedding your pet shares. Use detergent and the hottest wash and drying settings the fabric allows. Let everything dry before putting it back.
- [ ] **Empty the vacuum outside.** Seal the used bag or the contents of the canister in a bag for disposal. Follow the vacuum's cleaning instructions. Keep flea powders, sprays and collars out of the machine.
- [ ] **If you use a room treatment, read its label first.** Check that it lists fleas and the surface you plan to treat. Follow the directions for moving food bowls and toys, protecting aquariums, ventilation and when people and pets can return. Never use a room spray on a pet. Treat bedding only if the label specifically lists it.

On your pets

- [ ] **Make a plan for each pet.** Check the species, age and weight on the product label. A dog-only treatment can harm a cat. For a rabbit, a young animal or a pet that is ill, ask your veterinarian which products are suitable.
- [ ] **Write down the product and next dose.** Keep the package. Before adding a flea shampoo, collar or tablet, check with your vet about combining products. Check the label before bathing a treated pet or giving another dose.
- [ ] **Skip the kitchen remedies.** Leave vinegar out of the water bowl and household powders out of your pet's coat. If you are deciding what to buy, tell your vet what you have already used and when. That makes it easier to choose a suitable next step.
- [ ] **Use the comb again as you go.** Pay attention to the same areas so you can compare what you find. If your pet seems weak, has pale gums or is scratching its skin raw, contact a veterinarian.

Compare flea treatments for pets and the home on Fleabites.net

Where to look next

In your yard

- ☐ **Check the spots your pet actually uses.** Look around the kennel, under the porch and in shady places where your dog or cat lies down. If fleas keep turning up on a visiting animal, note where it rests before deciding which area needs attention.
- ☐ **Clear those resting places.** Pick up clutter and trim overgrowth around runs and under steps. Wash outdoor pet bedding where the fabric allows. If you find a rodent or wildlife nest, get pest-control advice before disturbing it.
- ☐ **Use outdoor products only where needed.** If you find fleas in a particular spot, check whether the product is labelled for that site. Follow directions for application, runoff and pet re-entry. A flea in the house is no reason by itself to spray the whole lawn.

Check again

- ☐ **Revisit the same spots.** New adults can emerge from protected pupae after cleaning and treatment begin. Keep vacuuming resting areas, combing your pet and following the product schedule. Record live fleas and where you found them so you can see the trend.
- ☐ **If sightings continue, use your notes.** Check for a missed resting place or pet. In a home without pets, consider previous pets, visiting animals or rodents. Share your notes and product names with your veterinarian or a licensed pest professional if activity fails to decline.

My follow-up log

Use one row each time you check. Write down the date, the places you checked and what you found.

What I did today	When I'll check again	What I found

Further reading: CDC's guide to getting rid of fleas · FDA's guide to flea products for pets