

Reducing Airborne Allergens

According to the ACAAI, restricting pets to as few rooms in the home as possible can help manage allergens, however, isolating a pet to one or multiple rooms will not restrict allergens to that particular room. "Air currents from forced-air heating and air-conditioning will spread the allergens throughout the house. Homes with forced-air heating and/or air-conditioning may be fitted with a central air cleaner. This may remove significant amounts of pet allergens from the home."

The AAAAI's (American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology) website also contends that because pet dander is light and buoyant, it can float freely in indoor air, and that air cleaners can be a big help in removing unwanted allergenic particles, especially cat dander. Another recommendation is placing a screen or filter over particular room vents (such as your bedroom) to keep dander from traveling through your home's heating and air conditioning system's ductwork.



See Your Doctor

The severity of allergies varies from one individual to the next. Reactions can range from mild sniffing and sneezing to more serious reactions. If you believe you may be allergic to your pet, see your allergist. Many times an allergy sufferer is sensitive to multiple irritants such as dust, pollen and smoke. Reducing the overall allergen level in your home, and not just the pet allergen may be necessary. For more information consult your doctor to get tested or to see if immunotherapy is an option.

To learn more, check out these free online resources:

Aprilaire Indoor Air Quality Products
www.aprilaire.com

The Humane Society of the United States
www.hsus.org

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
www.aaaai.org

American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
www.acaai.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org

Taming Your Animal Allergies



With more than 100 million pets in US households, and an estimated 10 million pet owners who are allergic to them, it's no surprise that there's a whole lot of sneezing going on.

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Studies indicate more than 70% of households currently own one or more domestic animals. About a third of the population that is allergic to cats, live with at least one cat in their home anyways. Whether it's a cat, dog, hamster, bird, rabbit or other household animal, simple steps can be taken to make your pet allergies more tolerable.

Don't Blame the Fur

Allergic reactions are caused by exposure to proteins that are normally present in secretions from the glands in the skin as well as in the animal's saliva or urine.

Contrary to popular belief, it doesn't matter whether your pet has short or long hair — It's the pet's dander (skin scales) that can cause some of the worst allergic reactions. Although a pet's fur doesn't in itself cause allergic reactions — a pet's hair is a good airborne carrier of pet dander and saliva as well as dust, mold spores and other allergens.

Prevention is the Best Treatment

Allergists agree that the best treatment for pet allergies, as for all types of allergies, is avoidance of the things that cause allergic reactions. But avoidance doesn't necessarily mean living without pets, especially when a family member's allergies are moderate in nature.

Dr. Robert A. Wood, Director of the Pediatric Allergy Clinic at Johns Hopkins offers a simple avoidance strategy for those who have moderate animal allergies but don't want to give up their pets.



For pet allergy sufferers who decide to keep their pet, Dr. Wood recommends keeping pets outdoors to eliminate as many allergens from the home as possible. This option, however, may be difficult in areas where animals cannot be kept comfortably or safely outdoors.

Recommended Strategies:

Strategy 1 – Avoid Allergen Exposure

Reduce the overall allergen burden in your home by restricting your pet to non-carpeted areas. Keeping pets out of the bedroom is a sensible strategy since you spend roughly one-third of your time there. If possible, remove carpeting and upholstered furniture, once allergens get into them, they may remain there as long as six months.

Strategy 2 – Remove Allergens From the Air

Good ventilation and a high efficiency, whole-house air cleaner help remove allergens already in the home. A high efficiency media air cleaner can remove up to 95% of airborne particles as small as 1/25,000th of an inch.

Strategy 3 – Groom Your Pet Regularly

You can help make your pets less of an allergy source by keeping them groomed and clean.

Like many allergists, Dr. Ilona Rodan, a veterinarian and a past President of the American Association of Feline Practitioners, recommends both regular combing and bathing. Dr. Rodan, both a cat owner and a mother of a child with allergies, recommends having a non-allergic person comb the pet everyday either outside or away from the allergic person's sleeping area.



Tips from the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI) and the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA)

- Avoid hugging and kissing pets if you're allergic to them.
- Wash hands after handling a pet to help avoid the spread of dander.
- Remove litter boxes from direct contact with pet allergy sufferers and place them in areas away from vents.
- Wear a dust mask to vacuum. Use a vacuum with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter if possible.
- Wash your pet on a weekly basis. Check your local pet store for shampoos that may neutralize or inactivate allergens present on your pet's skin.

