



Coping with Pet Allergies

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Pets can be a wonderful addition to our lives but if you suffer from pet allergies, a fluffy cat or playful pup can be torturous. It is estimated that approximately 15 percent of the population suffer from some type of allergy to pets. However many people with pet allergies still have a companion animal. This shows that the benefit of having a pet outweighs the discomfort from the allergen. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to alleviate the symptoms of pet allergies.

Dogs and cats both cause reactions in people allergic to pets. There is not a single breed that doesn't cause allergic reactions. Some people are more sensitive to certain breeds and more people are allergic to cats than dogs. Do not believe that buying a certain breed of dog will prevent you from having an allergic reaction. Try to take these steps to alleviate some of your discomfort.

Solutions:

- Keep your pet brushed. This will remove some excess fur that may cause a reaction. Do not have the more allergic person in the family brush the dog or cat.
- Create an area of the house the pet is not allowed to go. It might be helpful to not allow the pet in the room where the allergic person sleeps. A person suffering from allergies will not be able to sleep as well in a room covered with fur and dander. Research HEPA filters to use in the living rooms of the house.
- Keep furniture, curtains and bedding clean. Wash bedding, blankets and throws often. Dust electronic equipment where static attracts hair. Regularly vacuum furniture and blinds. Use lint rollers or a damp cloth on curtains and furniture to clean quickly.
- Regularly vacuum and clean carpets and flooring. Baking soda or static remover on carpets can help loosen hair. Fur can also collect around baseboards. Use rubber dishwashing gloves, slightly dampened, around baseboards then dispose of the hair. Change the vacuum bag or empty the canister frequently.
- Use a vacuum attachment on your car's interior or use the technique above for removing hair from baseboards.
- Don't over bathe your pet. Bathing your dog too frequently will actually create more dander. Between baths use wipes specially designed to remove pet dander. They will not remove all the allergens but they can temporarily help. See handout "Grooming: Brushing and Bathing Basics."
- Talk to your doctor about treatments for allergies. They may need to test to see what the specific allergen is. Your pet may not actually be to blame. Seasonal changes bring on other allergy problems such as hay fever, pollen and mold. Unfortunately, this often coincides with seasonal shedding cycles.
- Keep your pet's bedding clean. Regular cleaning of their bed will reduce the overall allergens in your house. Every time the dog or cat gets on or off the bed they put hair and dander in the air.

Do not bring a new pet into the home until you are certain your family can deal with the allergens they produce. Spend time around friends' pets to find out how you will respond to dander. Most people will not overcome allergies after they get used to the pet. Fortunately, steps can be taken to reduce allergens in the environment. Please consult a physician to get more information about controlling your allergies.