



Pet Allergies

Almost 70% of United States households have a domestic pet, equally divided between cats and dogs. Almost 10 million pet owners (including children) are allergic to their pets

The prevalence of human allergy to pet dander has increased rapidly over the past six decades. Data now shows that 80% of Swedish children with cat allergies have never lived with a cat. This implies that the concentrations of cat allergens in schools or in houses without a cat are sufficient to cause sensitization.

Basic Facts on Pet Allergens

Animals release proteins into their surroundings through secretions (excretions and saliva), or as dander (dead skin flakes). In general, people are less allergic to the animal's fur or hair. *There are no "hypoallergenic" breeds of cats or dogs.* The length of hair or fur does not affect the presence of allergic dander in animals. Likewise, the accumulation of dander particles is not related to the cleanliness of the animals.

People with allergies to cats or dogs will usually experience symptoms within minutes. Those individuals with severe cat or dog allergies can experience reactions in public places if dander has been transported on a pet owners clothing. Pet dander is very light, buoyant and floats freely. Therefore even when a pet is restricted to one area of the house (or even outside) the dander can be spread easily through out the entire house.

Symptoms of Pet Allergies

The severity and exposure of an individual's allergy to cats or dogs, will determine which of the below listed symptoms someone can experience.

- Runny nose
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Wheezing
- Itchy/ watery eyes
- Shortness of breath
- Angioedema (swelling)
- Skin rash/Hives

Controlling Pet Allergies

- 1) Remove the pet from the house and avoid contact if you're highly allergic.
 - A) Keeping pets out of your bedroom can reduce allergy symptoms since you spend about 8 hours a day in this room.
 - B) Keeping animals outside is only a temporary solution since pet dander will eventually collect in the house as it is carried in on clothing.
 - C) It may take six months or more to completely get rid of cat dander particles in the home, even after the pet is removed.
- 2) Try not to hug and kiss pets if you are allergic to them.
- 3) Stay away from litter boxes and be sure to keep them away from vents in homes with central heat and air.
- 4) Wash hands after touching a pet so you don't spread the dander.
- 5) Bathe your pet every week, and if possible have it done by someone that is not allergic.
- 6) Someone who is not allergic should brush the pet regularly, outside of the home.
- 7) Vacuum regularly with a HEPA or double bag cleaner.
- 8) Think about placing plastic covers on the couch or other upholstered furniture where your pet sleeps.
- 9) Wipe down walls and treat carpeting periodically.
- 10) Change air filters regularly and use HEPA air cleaners in areas where the pets will be.