

Have an Allergy to Animals? What to Do Next

Many allergic animal lovers brush aside the prospect of enjoying a pet. But is that as smart as it appears at first glance? Do the advantages ever outweigh the disadvantages? These 15 tips might help you decide what to do next — and even how to help allergic houseguests thrive.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you or another family member are allergic to pets, it's important to proceed cautiously if you're thinking about getting a dog or cat
- The cause of most pet allergies isn't a dog's or cat's fur, but their skin dander and/or saliva
- Many people are allergic to a specific protein called FEL-d1 found in cat dander and saliva. Allergies to cats are more common than allergies to dogs
- There are many steps pet parents can take to minimize dog and cat allergens in the home
- There are also things you can do to make pet-allergic houseguests comfortable in your pet-friendly home

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published February 4, 2017.

If you're thinking about getting a dog or cat but you or someone else in the family have pet allergies, it's important to give serious consideration to all the potential consequences of having a furry sneeze trigger under the same roof with a person with allergies.

Children sometimes outgrow their hypersensitivities, but for most allergy sufferers, the condition is more or less permanent and won't improve with time or continued exposure to the pet. You don't want to commit to a new pet only to discover your allergic family member can't be in the same house with him or her.

The good news, however, is that most people who are allergic to their furry companions find ways to manage that don't involve giving up the animal. The benefits of sharing life with a pet seem to outweigh the bother of allergies for most animal lovers.

If you're on the fence about whether or not to get a pet, why not consider fostering a dog or cat first to see how things go?

What's Really Causing You to Sneeze?

Many people with pet allergies don't realize it's not an animal's coat that causes their sniffing and sneezing. Flakes of skin called dander are what cause most allergic responses. Even if your cat or dog is hairless, you can still be allergic.

You might also be allergic to your pet's saliva, either on his fur or when it comes in direct contact with your skin. Pet urine can also be a problem for some allergy sufferers.

And many people are allergic to a specific protein called FEL-d1 found in cat dander and saliva. Allergies to cats are more common than allergies to dogs.

Research into the hygiene hypothesis, which is the theory that humans can be too clean for their own good and underexpose their immune systems to common microbes in the environment, has provided compelling evidence that kids exposed to pets before their immune systems are fully developed at around age 2 are less likely to develop allergies than children without pets in the home.

15 Ways to Minimize Pet Allergies at Home

1. Consider making your bedroom (or the bedroom of your allergic family member) a pet-free zone. This means your dog or cat can't enter the room for any reason.
2. Purchase a good-quality ionic air purifier to help clean the indoor air of allergens and other pollutants.
3. To prevent a buildup of allergens inside your home, if possible, replace carpeting with hard flooring, replace drapes and curtains with non-fabric window coverings and avoid cloth-covered (upholstered) furniture.
4. Clean your home often and thoroughly, including any surfaces that trap pet hair and dander (couch covers, pillows, bedding, etc.).
5. Wash human and pet bedding frequently in hot water.
6. Bathe your dog or cat often using only safe, non-drying herbal pet shampoos.
7. If your pet rides in the car with you, consider using washable seat covers.
8. Family members should wash their hands after handling a pet. If you've been snuggling on the couch with your dog or cat, consider a shower and shampoo before lights out to avoid bringing pet allergens to bed with you.

If your children roll around on the floor or grass with their animals, they should also bathe or shower and shampoo before bed so they don't transfer pet allergens onto their pajamas and bedding.

9. Allow kids to be kids. Let your children play outside and get dirty, and use regular soap, not antibacterial soap, for hand washing and bathing.
10. Consider taking a probiotic supplement and/or eating traditionally fermented foods. Healthy gut bacteria is important for proper immune system function, and research indicates doses of good bacteria help train the immune systems of infants to resist childhood allergies.
11. Also consider taking quercetin, which is a bioflavonoid with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

It's called "nature's Benadryl" because it suppresses the release of histamine, which is what causes much of the inflammation, redness and irritation characteristic of an allergic response.

12. Bromelain and papain are proteolytic enzymes that increase the absorption of quercetin, and also suppress histamine production.

Use quercetin, bromelain and papain together because they suppress the release of prostaglandins, which are also a factor in the inflammatory process.

13. Omega-3 fatty acids help decrease inflammation throughout the body. One of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids is krill oil.

Consider supplementing with both krill oil and coconut oil. Coconut oil contains lauric acid, which helps decrease production of yeast, and together they can help moderate or suppress the inflammatory response.

14. Feed your pet an anti-inflammatory (grain-free), balanced and species-appropriate diet. Reducing or eliminating allergenic and genetically modified foods in your pet's diet can help reduce production of allergenic saliva.
15. Make sure your pet's essential fatty acid requirements are met. By assuring your pet has optimal levels of omega-3 fatty acids in her diet, you can dramatically reduce shedding and dander.

Reducing the allergen load in your home and minimizing allergic reactions to your pets will help every member of the family, two-legged and four-legged, live more comfortably together.

6 Tips for Hosting House Guests Who Are Allergic to Pets

1. Give your house a thorough cleaning a day or two before company arrives. Launder sheets and towels in hot water. Mop hard floors. Vacuum carpets and rugs; better still, have them professionally cleaned. Pay special attention to surfaces that trap pet hair and dander like couch covers, pillows and pet beds.
2. Change your HVAC filters and if you haven't already, consider investing in an ionic air purifier to clean the air in your home.
3. If your pet rides in the car with you and you plan to chauffeur your visitors around town or loan them your car, make sure to clean the interior of your vehicle. Vacuum the seats, seatbelts and floors. Clean the windows and wipe down any surface that collects pet hair, dander or drool.
4. Bathing your dog or cat immediately before guests arrive can help reduce allergic responses while they're visiting.
5. Despite all your best efforts, allergens can persist in your home environment for months or longer. If you have frequent overnight guests who are allergic to pets, consider making a guest bedroom a pet-free zone. Remove carpeting and window coverings that trap animal dander and replace with hard floors and wood blinds. Don't allow your dog or cat access to the designated pet-free area.
6. Make sure you have a supply of over-the-counter (OTC) allergy medication or natural support on hand in case your guests need it.

Sources and References

[Family Share \(Archived\)](#).
