

Allergy Avoidance: Pets

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The environmental precautions listed below are given as guidelines. Your doctor may recommend all or only some of these environmental controls depending upon your specific condition.

Recommended Methods to Avoid Pet Allergens

For people who suffer from allergies to animals, it is best that they not own pets. At a minimum, people who are allergic should not add new pets. The relative importance of removing a family member pet from the home of an allergic patient must be guided by the degree of sensitivity to the danders produced by that pet and severity of the allergic disease. Wherever fur-bearing animals live, the dander, or dandruff, from their skin accumulates in the surrounding environment and circulates in the air. These allergens can, in some instances, cause life threatening allergic reactions, particularly for patients with asthma. If pets must remain, it would be optimal for them to remain outside the home, and if not outside the home, then at a minimum outside the patient's bedroom. If allergic sensitivity has already developed to animal allergens, the importance of minimizing exposure is obvious. Secondly, the chance of developing allergy to these biologic particles can be substantially reduced by limiting exposure

1. Cats: The allergens from cats present a unique problem and may remain in your home for 6-18 months after the cat is removed. Tannic acid, 3% solution, may help accelerate the decline in cat allergen in your home by denaturing some of the cat allergen. Tannic acid may be sprayed on carpeting and overstuffed furniture. Care should be taken any time this product is placed on carpeting or furniture to ensure that staining will not occur. We recommend that our patients use an unseen area of cloth or carpet as a test area to ensure that unsightly staining will not result with the use of this product. However, tannic acid is generally thought to be ineffective unless the cat is removed from the home. Routine weekly bathing of your cat may also help to reduce the allergens it releases. People allergic to cats who own cats should consider using a high-efficiency, HEPA, vacuum, since the cat allergen may remain in the air for up to 8 hours after cleaning. Most water trap vacuum cleaners DO NOT remove cat allergen.

2. Birds. All people with respiratory allergies should avoid birds, since feather dust is a non-allergic trigger of allergic symptoms.

3. Outside Animals: Animal danders may also be carried into the home on your cloths even though the animal stays outside. For example, patients who are allergic to horses must avoid not only horses and stables, but also persons or objects directly or indirectly connected with the handling of horses. For example, contact with clothes worn for horseback riding, or playing with an outside dog, may cause as much trouble as direct contact with horses or dogs. Members of the family who ride or work with horses, or who are exposed closely to other fur-bearing animals, should change their clothes and wash themselves carefully before returning home. This does not mean that patients with inhalant allergy cannot enjoy horseback riding and outdoor pets, but it would be unwise for a patient with significant inhalant allergy to engage in a career in veterinary medicine or livestock farming.

