

Pets and allergies

Cats, dogs, guinea pigs, rabbits, horses, mice and rats can all trigger asthma and/or allergies in some people. But avoiding pet allergens can be difficult if the source is a much-loved furry family member.

As allergens are stuck to the hair and skin of pets, the allergens become airborne when the pet sheds their hair. The allergens can remain airborne for some time.



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Your furry family members

Cats and dogs are a major source of allergens in the home environment. The allergens come from the sweat glands in cats and salivary glands in dogs. As all cats and dogs have sweat and salivary glands there are no breeds that do not contain allergens, although the amount of allergen released can vary between breeds.

Cat allergen is especially difficult to remove from houses – it can remain in the house for months after the cat is removed. Cat allergen can be found in places where cats have never lived. For example, it can be carried around on clothing to schools and offices.

Ways you can reduce your exposure

The most effective way to reduce your exposure to pet allergens is to avoid those animals. If you know you are allergic to certain pets, ask friends to keep them outside when you visit.

If you are sensitive to your own pet, you can try to reduce how much allergen you come into contact with:

- Always wash your hands after touching your pet
- Keep your pet outside most or all of the time, making sure they have a safe, warm home outdoors
- Never let your pet into the bedroom
- After resettling your pet outside, clean the house thoroughly to remove sticky allergens left behind
- Vacuum carpets and upholstery regularly
- Ask someone else to groom your pet
- Do not wash your pet more than your vet recommends.

Even after taking these steps, it may take months before allergen levels are reduced. Make sure you take your prescribed medicines to help you keep your asthma and/or allergy symptoms under control.

If problems continue, unfortunately the only long-term solution may be to relocate your pet away from your home.