



Allergies occur in people who are more sensitive than “normal” people to innocent substances in their environment.

The substances in the environment that cause the symptoms are allergens.

Allergens are substances to which you are allergic. Many things in the environment can be allergens, some indoors, some outdoors, and some taken in as foods or medicines.

Allergens differ from patient to patient. There is no “one size fits all” list of allergens! Your symptoms may be caused by your specific allergy triggers. To find out what triggers your symptoms, your doctor needs to find out where and when the symptoms are worst, and then do skin or blood tests to look for “the allergy antibody”, called IgE. (See what is an allergy).

WHAT IS PET ALLERGY?

- Pet allergy occurs when someone who is prone to developing allergy has a hypersensitivity reaction (an exaggerated reaction by the immune system) to pet body allergens.
- Tiny microscopic protein particles are present in the scales of skin that fall off the animal's body (dander). These can set off allergic symptoms when breathed into the nose and lungs or deposited in the eyes of allergy sufferers.
- Allergy is most commonly seen with cats and dogs. It can also develop with rats, mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, and birds, as well as farm animals such as horses, cows, chickens, ducks, and geese.

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF PET ALLERGY?

Pet allergy can trigger symptoms in people with asthma, hay fever, eczema and hives (urticaria). Please see the brochures for each of these problems. The most common symptoms are:

- Sneezing, running or blocked nose
- Asthma symptoms such as coughing and wheezing
- Itchy watery and red eyes



TREATMENT

- The treatment of pet allergy is to treat the underlying disease, to stop further exposure to the pet, and to clean the house thoroughly.
- The only certain way to have no symptoms from pet allergy is to remove the pet from the home. After the removal of the pet, it may take many months for the allergen levels in the home to fall enough so as not to set off allergic reactions.
- Removing a much loved pet from the home may cause major emotional upset; however, not removing a pet from the home of a child with severe asthma may also result in poor asthma control with potentially dangerous consequences!
- Remember that pet skin scales may be found even in homes without these animals as it may be carried on clothing.
- Immunotherapy is available for cat, dog and horse allergy.



CAT ALLERGY

- Cat allergy is the most common pet allergy. The most important allergen in cats is found in their saliva. It is deposited on the fur of the cat by licking and then shed into the air and spread in the air, on walls, bedding and clothing in the home. Cat allergen is tiny and stays floating in the air for a long time. This makes it easy for an asthmatic to breathe it in and have an immediate allergic reaction. It also makes it more difficult to fully clean the home of someone with a cat, even after the cat has been removed.
- Cat allergen can also cause symptoms by being brought into homes where no cats live because it is carried on the clothes of people who own cats. This means that cat allergy sufferers may have symptoms at school or at work, even where cats are not around.
- Exposure to cats early on during an allergic baby's life increases the likelihood of them having cat allergy. On the other hand, studies of removing pets from the home of babies at risk of developing allergies have not shown any consistent effect.

PET ALLERGY



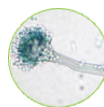
DOG ALLERGY

- Dog allergy is less common than cat allergy.
- Dogs have many different types of allergy provoking particles in their saliva and skin scales. Longer haired breeds which carry more skin scales may trigger allergy reactions more often; however, there is no such thing as a “hypoallergenic” dog.
- A dog’s lick can set off a severe allergic response, as can breathing in the allergen particles.
- Allergic individuals should wash their hands after handling dogs if they cannot be avoided.

OTHER PET ALLERGIES



Rabbits, rats, mice, hamsters and guinea pigs have allergens especially in their urine. These can cause problems when kept as pets, in infested houses and in people who work with these animals in laboratories.



Some birds can have allergens in their droppings which release proteins into the air causing long term lung problems and asthma. Birds also carry other allergens on their feathers, like mites, moulds and pollen.



Horse and cow skin scales can cause symptoms in some allergy sufferers. Horse allergy sufferers may have severe symptoms, and even anaphylaxis.



The cockroach, although not a pet, is a common cause of allergy problems in people’s homes.

A medical specialist with a special interest and skill in allergy might be able to help. See the list of health professionals with skills in allergy on the AFSA website.