



Allergic? You can have a pet!

If you or someone in your family is allergic to pet hair or dander, you don't have to give up your pet. If you are really willing to work at solving your allergy problem, there's a good chance that you can! Many people who were advised by well-meaning doctors that they would have to give up their pets have found other solutions and are now living comfortably, right along with their dogs and cats. **SO DON'T PANIC!**

Animal dander (skin dandruff that flakes naturally) is just one of many irritants that can cause allergic reactions. People with allergies are rarely allergic to only one thing-- someone who is allergic to a pet probably also has problems with dust, pollen, grasses, plant molds, ozone and other air pollutants, some foods, perfumes, smoke, and other substances. Because he is quite visible, the pet is often the prime suspect as a cause of the allergy. It is usually the pet who is considered, at least by the doctor, to be the most dispensable. **If you love your pet and want to keep him—read on!**

How to Attack Your Allergy Problem

Go to a reputable allergist. He or she will conduct tests to see exactly what you are allergic to. The test results help determine your course of action. Your regular doctor can probably recommend such a specialist. Insist on thorough testing. Some doctors give only a "scratch test." We do not feel this is conclusive. Many other tests are now available that are more informative and sensitive. Note: Allergy testing may be covered under your insurance plan.

Even if the doctor says your pet is part of your allergy problem, don't give up the animal right away. Remember, it's not Fluffy you're allergic to, it's the dander, excess fur and other non-pet related irritants. Try the following alternatives:

1. Invest in a good air purifier for your house or apartment. Some small room-size purifiers from department stores usually won't do the job. But "industrial-sized" specialized models usually will. Some people who suffer so severely that they have to be hospitalized can possibly live comfortably and breathe easily, even with cats in the family! The air purifier may work for you.

These "industrial-sized" air purifiers have a large capacity, and one unit will probably be enough for the average apartment. They can clear the air of animal dander, dust, fur and other air-borne irritants. Units are available which plug into a standard electrical outlet. Others can be added to home heating systems.

2. Desensitize your home. This is just a way of saying keep everything as clean and free of dust, fur and animal dander as possible.

Allergic people should live with as many washable surfaces as possible; the fewer carpets and upholstered pieces the better. Dander, fur and dust can accumulate on furniture and in carpets, and can build up to an intolerable level. Remember that nylon or synthetic carpets attract and hold dust much more than natural wool does.

Special non-allergenic washable covers are available for mattresses, box springs and pillows. We suggest you use non-allergenic polyester filled pillows and comforters- not feathers or down.

3. Here are several easy but important pointers to reduce your allergic reaction:

Groom your cat/dog thoroughly. Long or short-haired, s/he should be combed and brushed every day. (This will have the additional benefits of keeping the coat glossy, reducing shedding and preventing hairballs.) Even if your pet is not accustomed to grooming, s/he will learn to enjoy it if you start with a few strokes a day. Give them a treat before, during and afterward.

Bathing your pet is also a great idea, especially if you can get a non-allergic person to do the bathing. Most people are allergic to the proteins in the saliva of cats, and since cats are fastidious groomers, they leave their saliva on the hair coat. Baths help to wash off the salivary proteins. Use warm water and mild soap, rinse thoroughly, dry well and keep him out of drafts until he's fluffy again. Do not bathe your pet more than twice monthly.

Try Essential Fatty Acid Supplements— such as Shed Stop. These supplements reduce drying of the skin and reduce shedding and dander. They also add luster and softness to your pet's haircoat.

Kitty litter dust can aggravate allergies, Try the new pearls-type litter, recycled paper, or clumping litter. Another tip: pour the litter slowly into the pan. This keeps dust to a minimum.

Try Allerpet D (for dogs) and/or Allerpet C (for cats). These products are a drywash to be applied weekly to coat the hair and clean it of pet-specific allergens.

4. Many allergic people are especially sensitive to odors, and may find that some odors trigger an attack. Avoid perfumes, scented make-up (hypo-allergenic make-ups are sold at most drugstores), scented facial tissues, insecticides and cleaning fluids. Some scented laundry detergents and fabric softeners are especially irritating. Stay out of smoke-filled rooms. Neuter your cat if you have not already (do we have to explain why?). After feeding your pet canned food, remove the dishes and wash them to eliminate pet food odor.
5. Let someone else do the vacuuming and dusting in your house or apartment. When you do, you stir up dust and other irritants. If this is not practical, at least open a screened window to allow dust to escape.
6. Use air conditioning in the summer, to reduce humidity as well as the temperature. Use a humidifier in the winter, when it may otherwise be excessively dry in your home. A balanced humidity and moderate temperature will make allergic people much more comfortable.

We hope these pointers will help you control your allergy problem, and allow you to keep your pet. Each suggestion may contribute just a little relief. Together they may greatly help even a very severe allergy case.

You can try our suggestions one at a time, or use them all right away, depending on the degree of your allergy problem. Some people find that using only one or two solves their problem.

Remember that allergy is a condition that is often caused by several or many irritants, not just one. This means that the key to finding out exactly what you are allergic to, and then eliminating the irritants one by one. There's a very good chance that your pet won't even be one of those irritants, or not a serious one. Even if he or she is one source of your problems, reducing other irritants will often allow you to keep your furry companion.

An Important Note

In speaking with people who have conquered their allergy problem, we have learned a very encouraging fact. Very often, people build up a "resistance" to their own pets. Several people told us that once they had

made up their minds to keep their pet (whether cat or dog) they found that their allergy problem decreased as time passed. Although they continued to experience allergic reactions to other people's pets, tolerance of their own pet greatly increased. (Some of this, undoubtedly, is due to increased care and cleaning of the home and pet, as described above.)

This is just one more reason not to give in to your allergy by giving up your pet. While you are working at cleaning the air about you and desensitizing your home, your body is probably also working toward an adjustment. Many an allergy problem has had a happy ending. Most likely, yours will to – both for you and your pet!

Driving Tips

Pollen-sensitive persons should avoid riding in cars, especially in the country, during periods when pollen concentration is highest in their area. Blowing wind increases pollen count.

Avoid roadside areas and farms being sprayed with insecticides or weed abatement chemicals. If this exposure is unavoidable, keep your car windows closed.

When practical, avoid rush-hour traffic, heavily traveled highways, and frequent stoplight intersections. All of these are areas of excessive motor vehicle exhaust accumulation, which often aggravates allergic conditions.

Try to plan your routes to by-pass the immediate vicinity of refineries and industrial plants.

When refueling, have persons who are allergic to gasoline fumes remain inside the car with windows closed.

When driving, stay at least four car lengths behind other vehicles, particularly those producing heavy exhaust smoke. Don't follow close behind diesel buses or trucks.

Guide to Desensitizing a Room

- Avoid toys or stuffed animals. Toys should be wood, plastic, or metal, not fabric.
- Avoid perfumes, talc, cosmetics or flowers.
- Install roll-up washable cotton or synthetic window shades, rather than dust-catching venetian blinds. If you prefer curtains, use those of washable cotton or fiber glass, not fabric draperies.
- Paint walls or use a washable wallpaper. Inspect wallpaper closely for any swelling, which may indicate that molds are collecting under the paper. Pictures can be dust catchers.
- Don't use an electric fan, which simply moves dust around.
- Don't smoke, and stay away from smokers.
- An electric heater is preferred over forced hot air, because dust may accumulate in heating duct. In homes with forced air heat, make sure the filter is changed often. Electrostatic filters can be retrofitted to some forced air systems, but these are costly.
- Use covers for pillows, mattresses and box springs. Have all casings vacuumed frequently. Store nothing under bed.
- Use washable cotton or synthetic blankets, not fuzzy surfaced ones. Use an easily laundered cotton bedspread.
- Use synthetics for pillows, not feather or foam rubber which can harbor mold.
- Use rubberized canvas or plastic upholstered furniture. No fabric upholstery.
- Wood or linoleum flooring is preferable to rugs of any kind.
- Avoid ornate furniture. Simple designs catch less dust. Use closed bookcases.
- Keep all clothes in closets. Enclose wool clothes in plastic zipper bags. Don't use mothballs, insect sprays or camphor. Keep all closet doors closed.
- Cleaning tips: Dust your room daily. Damp-mop the floor with a solution containing a disinfectant, to prevent the growth of mold spores. When you vacuum, followed up by airing the room. Use a tank-type vacuum cleaner rather than the upright style.

How To Reduce Mold In and Around Your House

- Allow your home to breathe. Avoid heavy vegetation around and over the house, and it can encourage dampness and mold growth.
- Bathrooms are havens for mold. Wash tiles and grout frequently. Check corners, behind the toilet and under the sink – wherever moisture collects.
- Don't use dried flower arrangements. They can contain molds. Indoor plants can breed mold in their potting soil.
- Humidifiers, dehumidifiers and air conditioners are constantly exposed to dampness, which can encourage the growth of mold. Check them regularly for a musty smell. Spray with a mold inhibitor such as Lysol. (Lysol can be poisonous to pets, so don't use it near pets, their bedding, toys or food dishes.)
- Damp shoes, boots, sneakers and "sweats" will breed mold rapidly if not allowed to air out and dry.
- Paint basements and other potentially damp areas with a mold-inhibiting paint; this is available at most paint stores.
- Dehumidify your cellar. Molds like areas that are dark and damp.
- Keep your yard free of fallen leaves in the autumn. Molds are abundant in the grass during prolonged wet periods of spring.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us at Canyon View Animal Hospital at 303-948-5000.