



## ABOUT CAT AND DOG ALLERGIES

Allergies to cats and dogs are extremely common. Dander, skin flakes, and saliva from both cats and dogs are constantly airborne; this is worsened with scratching and grooming. The size of the dander particles are extremely small which mean they are able to be inhaled deep into the lungs. Symptoms of a cat or dog allergy may include: coughing and wheezing; stuffy, runny nose; sneezing; itchy, watery red eyes; rash or hives; perennial rhinitis; asthma.

The allergy occurs because the immune system of allergy affected individuals, for reasons not fully understood, misinterprets a substance as a disease agent and begins producing a type of antibody against it, called immunoglobulin E (IgE). The IgE produced during this response binds to basophils in the bloodstream and to a similar type of cell called mast cells in the tissues. When a person again encounters the allergen, these basophils and mast cells release histamine, which results in allergic symptoms.

### How can cat and dog allergy be avoided?

- Animal dander can cling to clothing and furniture. It can persist for months in a house even after the animal has gone. The best way to avoid cat and dog dander is to avoid contact with the animals. However, if you are unable to avoid contact some ways you may decrease your exposure include:
  - frequently
  - Replace air conditioner and heater vent filters regularly
  - Wash your hands after contact with the animal
- Keep your distance from the animal
- Maintaining short hair on the animal and groom daily removing any excess hair, you may need to wear a face mask when grooming
- Treat fleas and mites that make the animal scratch
- Remove the animal from the house if possible
- Ensure the animal is neutered
- Bathe the animal once or twice a week
- Wipe the animal down with a wet cloth daily
- Avoid the animal living on carpeted flooring, rugs or mattresses
- Vacuum any carpets or furniture frequently with a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA equipped filter
- Ventilate the house well opening windows and doors and by using exhaust fans
- Wipe down all hard surfaces and flooring