



Living with Cat Allergies

Just about anything with dander has the potential to bring susceptible people down with a suite of allergy symptoms. But it's not a pet's hair, or even the flaky, dandruff-like dander itself, that causes allergies. Instead it's a specific protein in the dander that triggers the allergy.

First, it's a good idea to make sure you really are allergic to dander by visiting an allergist, who can help identify which specific allergen is triggering your symptoms. Because allergies rarely come individually wrapped, other culprits, such as dust mites and pollen, may be causing reactions, too. An individual rarely has a single allergy. A cat owner may be able to tolerate contact with the cat in winter, but when spring arrives, all the allergies together may prove unbearable.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to manage pet allergies-- no matter how they affect you. With a few lifestyle changes, you can enjoy pets all your life! Disclaimer: please consult with your physician and veterinarian to decide which strategy is right for you.

PET ALLERGY TIPS

Keep your bedroom pet-free. Something as simple as making your bedroom a pet-free sanctuary can significantly decrease levels of allergens in that space. Also try switching to special allergen-proof bedding on the mattress and pillows designed to be less permeable to allergens.

Consider a HEPA filter. Stand-alone HEPA filters remove tiny airborne pollutants, like dust mites, pollen, and pet dander, from the air you breathe. Cat dander is very airborne and remains suspended in the air for a while. A HEPA air purifier will be able to filter out that dander. It should be running non-stop in the home, where your cat is, and where you frequent.

Learn to love housework. Begin by washing bedding, drapes, couch covers, pet bedding and pillows. Cat allergens are TINY so it may take months to reduce them significantly. Vacuum regularly using an allergen-proof vacuum cleaner bag or a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter. Change furnace filters to reduce the dander in the air. Some allergy sufferers tackle pet allergies by shampooing rugs regularly, changing/laundrying people and pet bedding frequently, wiping down walls where pets rub, and dusting often.

Consistently wash your hands. Wash your hands especially after petting the cat and wash your face frequently (avoid touching your eyes when petting the cat). Don't hug or kiss the cat; if you do, wash up afterwards with soap and water.

Wipe the dander away. Bathing a cat often is suggested as a way to reduce the dander, but experts disagree on its effectiveness. The cat would have to be washed almost daily for this approach to be effective. Instead, regular use of "pet wipes" or chemical free "baby wipes" (remember cats groom themselves so you do not want to coat their fur with toxic chemicals found in some wet wipes) will remove saliva and dander from your cat's hair.

Use dander reducer products for cats. You can try a dander reducer product on your pet such as Allerpet Cat Dander Remover. Such products claim to eliminate your symptoms by removing dander, saliva and other allergens from your pet's fur. Read product instructions and check with your vet first. If you select a spray product, spray in your palm first then apply to the cat as most cats are very afraid of having something sprayed in their direction.

Brush your cat frequently. Brushing your cat on a regular basis and throwing the hair away is a VERY important control method. It will also decrease hairball frequency, help you keep an eye on your cat for potential skin problems, and is a fun and relaxing activity for both you and your pet. For removing dead hair, a standard flea comb and/or a FURminator Brush are the two best options.

Make good cat food choices. Proper nutrition can help to keep skin and hair healthy and this keeps the hair cycle normalized, minimizing shed hair. We recommend feeding a canned food, grain-free diet to your cat for the high moisture content that will help keep the coat healthy. A grain free kibble can be used in addition to, not in place of, the wet food if needed.

Clean the litter box. Cat allergen is found in urine and is left in the litter box when your cat makes a deposit. To help prevent allergic reactions to the litter box, use a brand of litter that is less dusty and have someone in the household who is not allergenic clean the box at least twice a day.

Spray allergens away in the home. Anti-allergen sprays are an option to deactivate allergens, including those produced by pets. Allersearch ADS (sold on Amazon) is made from plant-based, non-toxic substances and can be sprayed throughout your home.

Medicate yourself. Over-the-counter or prescription antihistamines, decongestants, eye drops and aerosol inhalers will help reduce the symptoms, although they do not eliminate the allergy. Talk to your physician if you think you'll benefit from prescription allergy medication or allergy shots.

Understand your environment. No matter how religiously you clean, you'll still be exposed to dander. Pet allergens are "sticky," making it easy for people to carry them on their clothes. This explains why you'll find them in places that have no pets, such as schools, workplaces, and pet-free homes.