



## Pets in the Home

Pet allergies are very common. Up to 50% of children with asthma have symptoms triggered by pets. In people allergic to animal dander, exposure to furred animals and to a lesser extent, birds, can cause serious asthma symptoms.

Find out if you are allergic to animal dander by talking to your doctor about getting an allergy assessment done. Taking steps to avoid your *allergic* triggers will help you live a symptom-free life.

### **I am allergic to my pet. Do I have to get rid of him?**

If your allergy test shows that you are allergic, it is recommended that you find a new home for your pet. Once you have removed the pet from the home, the allergen will still be present for months, but will slowly reduce with subsequent cleaning. Consider removing furniture that has been contaminated.

If choose to keep the pet, try to keep it out of the bedroom or better yet, out of the house. If you decide to keep a pet that you are allergic to, you will be increasing the severity of your asthma over time.

### **My child has asthma but is not allergic to animals. Is it okay to get a furred pet?**

It is still not good idea to get a furred pet, even if your allergy assessment did not show a current pet allergy. If an allergy develops after getting an animal, it can be difficult to remove a pet from the home once family members have become attached to it. In addition, if you are allergic to pollen or mould, animals often carry these antigens into the home on their fur, increasing your exposure.

### **Is it true that there are 'allergy-free' dogs and cats?**

There is no such thing as an allergy-free dog or cat. People with animal allergies are allergic to the dander (flakes of shed skin), saliva and urine. All furred animals shed dander.

### **Will bathing my pet cut down on the dander in my home?**

This is a controversial topic. Bathing the animal once a week *may* help. Some experts say that this is not enough to have significant impact on dander levels, however



**We have a pet and have decided to keep it. What can we do to reduce exposure?**

Here are some tips to help you minimize your exposure to pet dander:

- Never allow the pet in the bedroom
- Keep pet in areas where there is hard floor that are easily cleaned
- Keep the animal outside as much as possible
- Do not allow the pet on furniture or carpeting
- Wash pet bedding regularly
- The person who has the allergy should not handle the animal or clean the pet's living spaces.

**We have decided to keep our pet. Do air cleaners work to reduce the levels of antigen?**

This is a controversial point where experts do not agree. Getting an air cleaner may help reduce some airborne particles, but they are not the most effective way to reduce exposure.

**Reduce exposure to allergens = reduced asthma symptoms**

**For More Information**

Contact the Asthma Society of Canada at 1-866-787-4050 or visit [www.Asthma.ca](http://www.Asthma.ca).