



Managing Allergies



Allergies to pets are really common, and still a bit of a mystery! Some folks are heavily allergic to one pet with almost no reaction to another. We have learned, though, that the most common causes of allergies are the pet's oil production as well as a protein found in their saliva and urine that can stick to their dander. While there are some things we can do to set you up with a pet that's less triggering to your symptoms, there's also a lot you can do at home to create a comfortable environment for yourself without having to live without a furry friend in your life.

Household Management

Wherever the person with allergies sleeps should be a pet-free zone. While dander might still find its way in there, keeping the bedroom as free from allergens as possible with regular vacuuming, laundering, and dusting will set the stage for a more restful and therefore healing night's sleep, leaving the body better prepared to deal with allergy symptoms at other times of the day.

Add HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filters and purifiers! These mechanical, pleated filters are great at trapping airborne allergens. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions about regularly cleaning the filter so that it stays efficient.

Limit the pet's access to harder-to-clean areas. Soft surfaces, like carpets, can be difficult to keep free of dander. Providing our pets with blankets and bedding that we can easily launder, while preventing them from spending too much time directly on things like upholstered furniture and carpeting, will significantly reduce the dander in the home. Acquiring a carpet shampooer or steamer to more easily clean those things is also a great addition!

For homes with central air conditioning or forced-air heat, **cover air vents with a filtering material** to prevent allergens from traveling through the ducts.

Clean regularly! We recommend statically charged tools like microfiber cloths for sweeping and dusting to avoid kicking up too much dust and dander into the air. Dusting, sweeping, and vacuuming on a weekly basis is an important baseline for keeping allergies under control.

Fun fact: kittens don't produce the same allergens as they will once they're adults, so a kitten that you don't have a reaction to may become an adult that you do. If you're set on adopting a kitten, we encourage you to make sure you have a lot of these house-prepping strategies in place as they enter adulthood in case you begin having a reaction to them!

Pet Management

Brushing your pet regularly will help remove dander. Since the act of brushing a pet releases dander, it can trigger an allergic reaction. If you live alone, we recommend that you do it outdoors, or that another person (friend, family member, or

When brushing a cat outside, please make sure you're using appropriate safety measures to ensure they don't escape! If you don't have a contained outdoor space, make sure to use a leash and harness.

groomer!) takes responsibility for brushing the pet regularly. Most pets love to be brushed and this can be a great opportunity for bonding, but it can be overstimulating for some animals, so we recommend taking breaks throughout the process to keep it a fun and pleasant experience for your pet.



Bathing is another option for amenable pets. Unlike brushing, many pets are not big fans of baths, but it can make a major difference for folks with allergies, so using positive reinforcement training to build a good (or at least neutral) experience with bathtime can have a huge impact. Make sure to choose a pet-safe shampoo! If that sounds intimidating, you can outsource and hire a groomer.

For cat owners, **a clean litterbox** is also an important part of allergen control because urine is a major carrier of cat allergens. While we recommend scooping your litter box every day for the cats' sake, replacing the litter at least twice a week and wiping the box down will help control allergy symptoms for the humans in the house.

Talk to your vet about your pet's diet! There are new foods on the market that may help reduce a cat's allergen production.

Symptom Management

Have a supply of **dust masks** to wear while cleaning, especially dusting and vacuuming, which can kick allergens up into the air. Better yet, have another member of your household do that cleaning.

Talk to your doctor about allergy management! There are a lot of over-the-counter options for addressing symptoms. If you haven't already been tested to confirm it's the pet you're allergic to, that can be really great intel. It might turn out to be a dust allergy, and we've been blaming the pet all along!

Wash your hands regularly! Keeping your hands free of dander will reduce your symptoms.

The Towel Test: Before You Adopt

If you're hoping to adopt a cat that triggers your allergies a little less, we recommend something called the "towel test." Part of our matchmaking process, the towel test allows **approved adopters** to come in with a few small towels that you can rub on any cat you like. You then place each towel in a separate plastic bag and label the bag with the cat's name. Once home, you can spend a few hours with each towel (one at a time so we know which cat causes a reaction).

Keep in mind that **we can't hold or reserve animals**, so this doesn't guarantee an adoption, and **cats under a year old are not eligible for this test.**