Cat Allergies



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The simplest way to deal with a cat allergy is to stay away from cats! If you’re a cat owner, or just love being around those adorable felines, don’t worry - there are plenty of ways you can make life easier.

How do I know if I’m allergic to cats?

Having a cat allergy is a bit like having a cold. Common symptoms are sore eyes and sneezing fits, and sometimes itchy skin. Some people who own cats don’t realise they have an allergy, blaming their symptoms instead on dust, or thinking they’ve caught a virus.

If your symptoms get worse when your cats are around a lot, or if they sleep on your bed, there’s a good chance you have a cat allergy.

What causes cat allergies?

Like many people, you might assume the problem is your cat's hair. In fact, cat allergies are caused by protein secretions from your cat’s glands. Grooming will leave dried saliva on her coat, leaving it full of these secretions.

Your cat will also drop dried skin (called “dander”) around the house. Dander is five times smaller than household dust particles, so it floats in the air for a long time before settling and is easy to breathe in.

Are short-haired cats better than long-haired cats?

Not really. In fact, research has shown that long-haired cats may even be better than short-haired cats when it comes to allergies. Any breed of cat can cause an allergy, although male cats produce more protein secretions than females, and neutered males produce less than non-neutered.

What can I do to ease the symptoms?

There are two main things that increase the amount of allergens in your home:

- Lots of soft furnishings
- Keep your cat indoors

If your cat stays indoors, try to keep her in certain parts of the house - and especially off the furniture! Mattresses, duvets, sheets and furniture covers all attract allergens, so don’t let your cat sleep on them, however much she might love to snuggle up in your bed!

Will cleaning my house help?

The most effective way to deal with allergens in your home is to keep things as clean as you can - including your carpets. Normal vacuuming can actually make things worse by throwing the allergens into the air, so try steam-cleaning your carpets - doing so once every three months should make a big difference.

It’s a good idea to use washable, anti-allergy bed covers. Wash your bedding at least every two weeks, on a 40° wash or hotter. And get into the habit of opening windows - the fresh air will help drive the allergens away.

If you want to make a more radical change, consider switching to smooth wooden or vinyl floors, and wipe-clean furniture with covers that can be washed regularly.

What about medication?

There are lots of medicines - and even injections - available to soothe your itchy throat and runny eyes. These are available over the counter or by prescription, so ask your pharmacist or GP for advice. The right course of medication, combined with the advice above, should enable you to cuddle up with your cat to your heart’s content!

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