

Children's Outpatients Department

Pet allergen avoidance

Pets are well loved and great companions. Unfortunately, they are also a major cause of allergy, the most common being cats and dogs. Other pets that cause problems are rats, mice, guinea pigs, hamsters, pet birds, horses, cows and poultry. Proteins from a pet's hair, saliva or urine can cause the allergic reaction.

Ideally the pet should be removed from the house, but this is not always possible. If this is the case, efforts should be made to reduce the amount of pet allergen in the home.

At home

- Keep pets out of the bedrooms and main living areas (if possible, keep pets outdoors)
- Restrict pets to well ventilated, non-carpeted areas
- Wash pet bedding regularly at 60 degrees
- Vacuum carpets and soft furnishings regularly with a high filtration unit
- Wash pets weekly in plain water and dry thoroughly
- Clean animal cages outside - replace any bedding or litter that has urine on it
- Consider not replacing the pet when it dies
- As pet allergen remains in the atmosphere, an air filter may reduce airborne allergen



Patient Information

Outside your home

- Avoid contact with relevant animals
- If possible, avoid visiting homes/areas where pets live
- If exposure is likely, try taking an antihistamine for a few days beforehand so that they are circulating in the bodies system
- Make sure that asthma is well controlled and use your prescribed preventative treatment for asthma symptoms
- Avoid touching the pet or being in the same room
- Wash hands after touching or being licked by a pet

Remember:

- Pet allergen is increased significantly if the animal is actually in the room.
- The amount of allergen can be 100 times higher in carpeted rooms than those with polished floor or lino.
- Cat allergen is everywhere and can remain in the house for several months after the cat has left.
- You may have never owned a cat but can still be allergic to them
- It's often difficult to avoid the allergens that come from other peoples pets. Cats live in or visit 3 in 4 homes in the UK. Cat allergen can be found in schools, nurseries, hospitals and even at the North Pole.
- Rabbit and guinea pigs should live outside.

When visiting someone with an animal that triggers your child's allergy, it's advisable for your child to take an antihistamine medicine 1 hour before. Also, suggest changing clothes when you get home so that animal hair is not spread around your home.

Patient Information

More information

More information on allergies, how to avoid them, and how to treat them, can be found on the following websites:

www.allergyuk.org

www.asthma.org.uk

www.nhs.uk

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