

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to manage pet allergies -- no matter how they affect you. But before you try the following tips, it's a good idea to make sure you really are allergic to dander.

If you're not positive you are allergic to dogs, cats, or other pets, VISIT AN ALLERGIST, who can help identify which specific allergen is triggering your symptoms.

Pet Allergies

Tip 1:

Change Your Environment

"**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, says Alan Goldsobel, MD, a spokesman for the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. Goldsobel also suggest switching to special bedding designed to be less permeable to allergens."

Consider a **HEPA Filter** .

HEPA filters remove tiny airborne pollutants, like dust mites, pollen, and pet dander, from the air you breathe. "Dander is so airy and light that HEPA filters can filter it out of the air," reducing your exposure, Chiu tells WebMD. Within a given area stand-alone filters are typically more effective than a whole-house HEPA system, Chiu adds.

As for those air **de-ionizers/purifiers** often hawked on late-night infomercials, they **may make allergies worse by releasing harmful ozone gas**.

"**Learn to Love Housework**."

I try to vacuum the bedroom frequently and change furnace filters to reduce the dander in the air," says Herrig. Other allergy sufferers tackle pet allergies by shampooing rugs regularly, changing people and pet bedding frequently, wiping down walls where pets rub, and dusting often. And to reduce the number of places where allergens can build up, Goldsobel suggests converting to hard-surface floor and minimizing the amount of upholstered furniture in your home.

Tip 2:

Change Yourself

"**Wash Your Hands**"

Some people bathe their companion animals in an effort to reduce pet dander, but this approach is "very transient" Goldsobel tells WebMD. While washing does decrease the amount of shed allergens, the effect lasts mere days -- while the cat's bad mood may last far longer! More effective is giving yourself a scrub by washing hands and face frequently."

Mediate With Medication.

Over-the-counter allergy medications, such as antihistamines, can relieve mild allergy symptoms like nasal congestion and itchy eyes, but they won't help asthma-type symptoms, such as wheezing and

chest tightness. Talk to your primary care physician or an allergist if you think you'll benefit from prescription allergy medication"

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. "



"Don't give up hope," says Anthony Herrig. With a few lifestyle changes and a little help, you can enjoy pets all your life!

Consider Allergy Shots.

If you know you'll be around pets long-term -- for example, your young kids have a new puppy -- you might want to consider allergy shots. These shots are also called allergy vaccines. Allergy shots help you develop protective antibodies so that you won't have an allergic reaction when exposed to an allergen. Allergy shots require patience, however. It can take almost a year of weekly injections before you convert to monthly maintenance doses, then another 3-5 years of monthly shots before you no longer have allergy symptoms -- and need no more medication."

Expand Your Definition of "Pet."

If, after Fido or Fifi have passed on, you still crave a pet's companionship, think creatures without feathers or fur. Allergy experts recommend turtles, geckos, lizards, snakes, fish -- even

tarantulas. [Source](#)



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