TIPS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

If necessary, separate yourself from your pets. As painful as that may be: A spatial separation, for example from the bedroom, is not sufficient to alleviate the symptoms.

Do not acquire “substitute animals” if you separate for allergy reasons from your pet. In most cases, an allergy develops to the new animal after some time as well.

If animal contact is unavoidable, have effective medication ready or take it as a preventive measure. Keep in mind that even in public spaces high concentrations of cat or dog allergens can be found.

Regular cleaning of your home can help reduce allergen exposure.

Ideally use synthetic materials as bedding and avoid duvets.

Use HEPA air filter systems to reduce animal hair allergen quantity in the air.

GET MORE TIPS AND INFORMATION

If you would like additional information, visit us at our Patient Information Portal. For instance, you will find a practical allergy test here along with many other useful tips.

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www.allergie-freizeit.de

The website has been awarded with the “MeinAllergiePortal Digital Health Heroes Award 2018”.

Allergopharma GmbH & Co. KG
21462 Reinbek / Hamburg • Telephone +49 40 727650
Fax +49 40 7227713 • info@allergopharma.com
www.allergopharma.de • www.allergopharma.com

Allergopharma AG
4106 Therwil • Telephone +41 61 7218866 • Fax +41 61 7218868
info.ch@allergopharma.com • www.allergopharma.ch

Austria: Allergopharma Vertriebsges. mbH
1230 Vienna • Telephone +43 1 61571540 • Fax +43 1 6157153
office.at@allergopharma.com • www.allergopharma.at
The word allergy essentially means ‘foreign reaction’. This fairly accurately describes what happens in your body in case of an allergy. An allergy is nothing more than an exaggerated defense reaction of the immune system to certain, normally harmless environmental substances. These substances are called allergens.

In case of an animal hair allergy, these allergens are found, among other things, in the fur, skin, saliva and feathers of animals. Symptoms of an animal hair allergy may appear following direct contact with certain animal species or products. However, indirect contact through inhalation of allergens trapped in textiles may also trigger typical symptoms. Statistically, the risk of developing an allergy is highest when it comes to house pets such as cats or dogs. However, it is also possible for allergies to develop to other animals such as horse, cow, rabbit, hamster or guinea pig. Allergies to exotic animals such as chinchillas, desert mice, ferrets, amphibians and reptiles are also known. Basically, it is possible to develop an allergy to any animal.

Particularly in the case of cat or dog hair allergies, it is difficult to avoid contact with the allergens. Because they cling to clothing and hang for a long time in the air, they are nearly everywhere in public spaces such as schools and public transport. The risk of developing an allergy to certain breeds of dogs, such as boxers and schnauzers, is higher than for other breeds. For cats, the breed is not important, though the sex is: Male cats are more often the cause of symptoms than females.

Depending on your personal sensitivity and the intensity of the allergen to which you have been exposed, anything from the mildest to the most severe forms of these symptoms may occur when you are allergic to animals.

The possible symptoms of an animal hair allergy

**NOSE**
- Allergic sniff rhinitis with sneezing, congested or runny nose, itchy nose

**EYES**
- Allergic conjunctivitis with itchy eyes and redness

**LUNGS**
- Allergic asthma with dry cough and shortness of breath

**SKIN**
- Neurodermatitis with itchy red rash, hives with wheals and redness

**WELL-BEING**
- Circulatory symptoms up to an allergic shock (e.g. after being bitten by exotic animals)

Depending on your personal sensitivity and the intensity of the allergen to which you have been exposed, anything from the mildest to the most severe forms of these symptoms may occur when you are allergic to animals.

So-called cross-reactivity of allergens can mean that you may react to animals other than those typical for your allergy. The following table shows examples of how animal hair allergies may be connected.

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If you are allergic to cat or dog hair, it is very likely that you are also allergic to hair from other animal species (e.g. guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters and cows).

Sensitization to animal allergens is considered a strong risk factor for the development of allergic asthma.

The cause of animal hair allergies can only be treated with immunotherapy. Through regularly administering the allergy causing substances, your immune system can be positively influenced, which allows your body to build its own tolerance to the allergens.

Allergen immunotherapy is the only treatment that targets the root cause of your animal hair allergy. It can lead to a permanent reduction in your symptoms and improve your long-term quality of life. It should be undertaken as early as possible in the course of the disease. It can be administered as injections, drops or tablets. For successful therapy, treatment must be administered without interruption for at least three years.