

Pet Advice For Patients

Telephone: +1-817-421-0770



For Patients Physicians Services Learning/Resources Patient Portal
Pollen Count Contact Us

Pet Advice For Patients

Keeping domestic animals as household pets is a universal activity. Pets provide companionship, security, and a sense of comfort. Children often learn responsibility and lessons about life and death from pets. However, people with allergies should be cautious in deciding what type of animal can safely be brought into their home.

Pets can cause problems to allergic patients in several ways. Their dander (skin flakes) can cause an allergic reaction as well as their saliva and urine. The animal hair itself is not considered to be a very significant allergen.

The best types of pets for allergic patients are tropical fish, snakes, lizards, turtles, salamanders and certain types of frogs and tortoises. All of these pets do not have hair, fur or dander nor does their excrement create allergic problems. However, patients should keep in mind that large aquariums can add water vapor in a room, thus increasing mold and house dust mite concentrations in their home.

The most common pets

The most common household pets are dogs, cats, birds, hamsters, rabbits, mice and guinea pigs. Larger animals such as horses, goats, cows, chickens, ducks and geese, even though kept outdoors, can also cause problems with kept as pets. It is estimated that 25% of children are exposed to horses either by riding them or by being in their barns or pens.

The number of pets in the United States is estimated at more than 100 Million. This large number also increases the likelihood of accidental exposure to animals by the allergic patient when visiting homes, farms, etc.

Both feathers and the dropping from birds, another common pet, can increase the allergen exposure. The allergic patient should not use feather pillows or down comforters. If a feather pillow is used, it should be placed in a plastic encasing. An encasing with a zipper is recommended so none of the feathers can escape.

Bird droppings can be a source of bacteria, dust, fungi and mold. This also applies to the droppings of other caged pets such as gerbils, hamsters and mice. Urine from

mice is an especially potent allergen.

Ways to reduce reactions/complications

The ideal situation for an allergic reaction would be to have no pet at all. However, many pet owners feel strongly about their pets, and would rather remove the allergic individual from the home than the pet! A pet such as a dog or cat should at least be kept out of the patient's bedroom. Recent studies have shown that bathing the cat and possibly the dog once a week can decrease significantly the amount of the allergen that the allergic patient is exposed to. The avid pet owner may claim that exposure to his or her pet does not cause them any problem. This however, should be viewed skeptically since pet ownership is an emotionally charged subject. Also, many allergic pet owners are rarely away from their pets, so an accurate reporting of pet related symptoms may not be possible. The best test to confirm if a person is allergic to a pet is removal from the home for several weeks and a thorough cleaning done by the non-allergic individual to remove the hair and dander. It should be understood that it could take weeks for meticulous cleaning to remove all the animal hair and dander before a change in the allergic patient is noticed. Testing to determine an allergy to animals is not always accurate. Skin testing, or radioallergosorbent test (a blood test for allergens) can give a "false" negative reaction.

A frequently mistaken idea is that shorthaired animals cause fewer problems. It is the dander (flakes of skin) that causes the most significant allergic reactions, not the length of the hair on the pet. As stated previously, allergens are also found in the pet's saliva and urine. In addition, dogs have been reported to cause acute symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis (inflammation of the eyes) and hay fever after running through fields and then coming back into contact with their owners.

Severe Reactions

Some allergic patients may have severe reactions (wheezing and shortness of breath after exposure to such pets as cats, rats, horses and guinea pigs. Also, a chronic, slowly progressive feeling of shortness of breath, loss of energy and feeling of fatigue can result from long-term exposure to birds and their droppings. This type of disease is known as hypersensitivity pneumonitis and can result in severe disability. In the event of these severe cases, removal of the offending animal is mandatory. In summary, pets can cause direct and indirect allergic problems, both from the dander and from pollen accumulated on the fur. Allergic children and adults should not pet, hug, or kiss their pets because of the allergens on the animal's fur and saliva. Those pets that are known to cause allergic reactions should be kept out of the patient's bedroom and if possible, live outdoors.

Limit Pets to a Few Rooms

Indoor pets should be restricted to a few rooms in the home if possible. Isolating the pet to one room however, will not limit the allergens to that room. Air currents from

forced-air heating and air condition will spread the allergens throughout the house. Homes with forced-air heating and/or air conditioning may be fitted with a central air cleaner. This may remove significant amounts of pet allergens from the home. The air cleaner should be used at least four hours per day.

5 Star!

Dr Richard Mayse
& all the staff are
exceptional!

— *Janice Raver*

TRAAC Staff

The staff at Texas
Regional Asthma and
Allergy Center are
standing by to help you!

If you have questions,
need to set appointments
or any other service
related items, call today!

Contact Traac

If you have questions or
comments, please
contact us directly! We
welcome your
suggestions and hope to
make your experience
the best it can be!

Contact us

TRAAC Social Media



Copyright © 2016 Texas Regional Asthma and Allergy
Center. All rights reserved