

Information About Cat Allergies

There are over **94 million pet cats** in the U.S.¹ and because of their popularity, that number will continue to rise! Cat allergies can lead to chronic asthma. For the **30% of people with asthma, a severe attack can occur when they have contact with a cat.**³ Studies have shown that cat allergens are everywhere, **including in homes that have never had pets.**² Because it's nearly impossible to avoid cat allergens, it's crucial to identify and treat your severe cat allergies.



What Causes CAT ALLERGIES?

People with cat allergies have an immune system response when exposed to the Fel d 1 protein. This protein is found in cat saliva, urine, or dander (dead skin cells and dried saliva). The Fel d 1 protein collects on the cat's fur when it licks itself. Then it comes off in tiny flakes of skin that stick to walls, carpets, furniture, or stay airborne. People inhale dried airborne proteins into the lungs and nose. Even a scratch or lick can cause welts or itchiness.

Cat Allergy SYMPTOMS

If you have any of the following symptoms after spending time near a cat, you may have cat allergies. Symptoms can range from minor to severe.

- Sneezing
- Runny, itchy, or stuffy nose
- Skin rash or hives on the chest or face
- Coughing and/or wheezing
- Skin redness where a cat has scratched, bitten, or licked

Cat Allergy TREATMENT

Treatment options for cat allergies will vary depending on your symptoms and their severity. Below are some common treatments for specific allergy symptoms. Your allergist can recommend a treatment plan to best address your specific condition.



Nasal

Steroid nasal sprays, oral antihistamines, or other oral medications



Allergy Shots

Injections that build tolerance over time by gradually increasing doses of the allergen



Respiratory or Asthma

Inhaled corticosteroids or bronchodilators to either prevent or relieve respiratory symptoms

Cat Allergy DIAGNOSIS

If you suspect you have cat allergies, your allergist is here to help! They will ask you questions about medical history, symptoms, and triggers, and may suggest allergy testing to confirm your allergy.



A **skin prick test** is the most common type of allergy testing. This test involves pricking your skin with a sterile device and then applying a small amount of allergen extract to your skin. Then you're monitored for swelling, redness, or other signs of a reaction. This reaction helps your allergist determine the severity of your cat allergy and can help them identify potential treatments to help relieve your symptoms. In some cases, a doctor may use a **blood test** instead of a skin prick test.





Tips for Reducing Exposure to CAT ALLERGENS

Avoidance is the best way to manage your cat allergy. If that's not possible, some strategies may help minimize your symptoms.

- Restrict your cat to a few rooms in your house and keep it out of your bedroom. It won't prevent allergens from reaching other rooms, but it may reduce their levels.
- Avoid petting, hugging, or kissing the cat. A small amount of contact can trigger your allergies.
- Limit your exposure to the cat. Keep your distance and ask a non-allergic household member to care for the cat, including cleaning the litter box and bathing.
- Run a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaner continuously in your bedroom or living room to help reduce allergen levels.
- Use a high-efficiency vacuum cleaner or central vacuum to help reduce allergen levels. And make sure to vacuum at least once per week. If your allergies are severe, ask a non-allergic household member to vacuum.
- Plan ahead. If you plan on staying in a house with a cat, ask if it can be kept out of your sleeping space for a few weeks before you arrive. And start taking your allergy medications early.

Hypoallergenic Cats - Fact or Fiction?

You may have heard of hypoallergenic cats. These breeds are considered less likely to cause an allergic reaction. But despite popular belief, **hypoallergenic cats don't exist**. There are some breeds that are thought to produce lower levels of pet dander and proteins compared to other breeds.⁴ However, the types and amount of cat allergen produced can vary significantly between individual cats. And people may react more severely to one particular cat over another.

References
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