

AVOIDANCE OF ANIMAL DANDER

The following advice is based on research into the field of cat allergy. Because the antigen is well defined in cat allergy, there is a wealth of information available. This is not the case in dog allergy where the information is limited. For purposes of avoidance we have assumed the advice for cat avoidance to be applicable to that of dog. It is important to remember that it is not the animal hair that people are allergic to, but, in fact the protein that is in both the dander (flakes of skin) and the saliva. These allergens are extremely small in size and suspend in the air from minimal disturbances such as vacuuming, walking, and changing bed linens. Studies show that, even after eliminating the animal from the house, the animal proteins persist for months or up to years. **There is no substitute for removing the cat or dog from the home.** If it is not possible to avoid exposure to the animal you are allergic to the following can be done:

1. The animal should never be allowed in the bedroom. Always keep door closed.
2. Encase the pillow, mattress and box spring in plastic. This prevents the antigen from penetrating the sleep materials. A washable pillow that is washed in hot water each week is an alternative to covering the pillow. Encasement can be acquired from local stores or from the 1-800 numbers listed below.
3. All the bedding, including the sheets, blankets and bed cover should be washed weekly in hot water (130 F). This destroys the antigen in bedding.
4. Ideally, the carpet should be removed from the bedroom. If this is not possible the carpet should be sprayed with tannic acid every 3 months. Tannic acid can be acquired from some local stores, as well as the 1-800 number listed below.
5. Wash the animal in water on a weekly basis. It has been shown that washing the animal decreases the amount of protein it releases. It is best to use just tap water when washing the animal. You should avoid shampoo as it will dry out the animal's skin and can cause rashes. It usually takes a couple of months for the animal to get used to being washed.
6. Use a HEPA filter in the bedroom. This should be left in the bedroom of the person who is allergic with the door shut and be kept on at all times.
7. Vacuum on a weekly basis. When vacuuming, it is a good idea to have the person who is allergic leave the house or wear a mask.
8. Place filters on heat and air conditioning vents in the bedroom.
9. Wash the animal's bed frequently in hot water. This will decrease the animal antigen.

Again, the most important thing is to remove the animal from the home. If the animal cannot be removed, the steps above can be followed. The animal's antigen, even after the animal has been removed, can persist for a long period of time. At the bottom of this page is a listing of 1-800 numbers that sell tannic acid as well as covers for the bedding. Again, it should be noted that these items can usually be purchased in stores locally.

1-800-422-DUST 1-800-522-1448 1-800-771-ACHO