

Pets & Other Animals

Unfortunately, pets can make asthma worse if you're allergic to them. Animals that can act as asthma triggers include:

- Cats
- Dogs
- Gerbils and hamsters
- Rabbits
- Mice, rats and guinea pigs
- Birds
- Horses



Often, people think that fur or feathers are what trigger symptoms in people with asthma. But in fact, if you have asthma, you could be sensitive to an animal's:

- Dander (particles of skin)
- Saliva
- Oil secretions
- Urine or feces



If you have an animal in your home and your family doctor or allergist determines that it is a trigger for your symptoms, it is **highly recommended** that you remove the animal from your home. Removal of a pet from the home is the single most effective environmental avoidance strategy for optimal asthma control.

If you decide to keep the pet even though you are allergic, you will be increasing the severity of your asthma over time. There is no such thing as an allergy-free dog or cat. All furred animals shed dander. Reducing your exposure to pet allergens is the most effective way to help your asthma.

If you are unable to remove the pet from the home, try these things:

- If the animal is a cat or a dog, have someone else wash it twice a week.
- Remove carpeting in the home (especially in the bedroom).
- Clean the house (and especially your bedroom) frequently using a vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter or a central vacuum system with an outdoor exhaust.
- Encase your mattress and pillows in special allergen-proof covers.
- Do not allow the animal in your bedroom.
- Keep it off furniture, and away from carpets and other soft surfaces where allergens can accumulate.
- Use a HEPA air cleaner in the bedroom.