

# Animal lover allergies

## TRIGGER FACTORS

Many households are shared with much loved pets who keep the family company and love to be cuddled. One thing that can put a strain on this relationship, however, is an animal allergy. Be it cats, dogs, guinea pigs, rodents or birds – they all have the potential to provoke allergy symptoms like sneezing, itchy eyes, permanent colds, rashes or asthma. Experts from the specialist retail chain Max Zoo give some tips on how to cope.



“Animal hair is not the triggering factor at all”, says the vet Lioba Schaetz. It’s the proteins in saliva, sweat, excrement or in skin particles which are the allergens. They end up in the room air via certain carriers like hairs or dust. The allergens stick to cat’s hair in particular as cats are constantly moistening their fur with saliva. The critical factors with birds are feathers, droppings or mites. If the animal allergens reach the human mucous membranes such as the nose, bronchial tubes or eyes via the air, sensitive people react to them allergically.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT ALLERGIES?

“If you want to keep a pet and already know that you react allergically to animals, you should take a test, without fail”, advises Lioba Schaetz. “This way you can find out which

animals will be harmless to live with.” Dog allergies are less frequent and limited to specific breeds. Aquariums or reptiles are alternatives for very sensitive people. If one or more animals are already living in the house, these will not necessarily have to be given away. Sometimes certain rules can help. For example, don’t overdo the cuddling of your

pet and always wash hands afterwards. Daily hovering and regular floor mopping prevents dusts traps and you should always keep animals out of the bedrooms. If these measures don’t help the situation, then only a medicinal or veterinary treatment will help.

## CHILDREN’S IMMUNE SYSTEM

Otherwise animals in the home do not unavoidably carry an allergic illness. Just the opposite; if children come into contact early enough with substances which can trigger allergic reactions such as animal hair or pollen, the risk of allergy sinks, as a study by the University of Goeteborg in Sweden has shown. Living with pets and nature in the early years can crank up the immune system in a natural way and prevent allergic colds and asthma.

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## ANIMALS SUFFER FROM ALLERGIES TOO

Our pets too can react allergically to certain substances in the air or in their food. In their case, the symptoms are mainly itching skin rashes, watery eyes or gastric complaints. Triggers for the over sensitive animal can be house dust and food mites, for example, and even grass pollen or relatively common flea saliva. The treatment of allergies in pets is, however, far more difficult than with humans. If you suspect your pet has an allergy, the best thing is to discuss a course of action with your vet. Sometimes a change of food can help or a reliable flea prophylaxis.



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