

What can I do if my child has a reaction?

If your child develops a sudden reaction to animals they should be given antihistamine and use their rescue inhaler if they have asthma. Children with pet allergy may need to take regular antihistamines to control their symptoms. If they know that they are going to be in contact with animals they should take antihistamine before leaving home.

Severe symptoms are:

- Difficulty breathing (wheezing, noisy breathing, blue colour)
- Swelling in the throat (noisy breathing, drooling)
- Feeling faint or dizzy, looking very pale (lie the child down with their legs raised).

If any of these severe symptoms occur get help straight away and dial 999 stating “anaphylaxis” (ana-fil-ak-sis).

Who needs to know about this allergy?

It is important to inform the nursery/school and any after school clubs. Any other carers such as grandparents, relatives and school friends' parents will need to know.

Will my child outgrow these allergies.

Children do not tend to grow out of animal allergy but their symptoms may vary over time. Those children with pet allergies should be advised to avoid jobs involving close contact with animals.

Contact details?



North West Paediatric Allergy Network

Pet Allergy

Information for parents and carers

www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk

What is Pet Allergy?

Pet allergy is an allergic reaction to proteins (allergens) in saliva, dead flakes of skin and urine of animals. Any animal fur or feather can be a source of pet allergy. Cats, dogs, small animals including rabbits, guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters, mice, rats and horses are the most common. Children can also be allergic to pet birds. Pet allergy is rarely caused by animals that don't have fur or feathers, such as fish, insects and reptiles.

What are the symptoms of pet allergy?

Symptoms of pet allergy can include sneezing, runny nose and itchy, puffy eyes as with hayfever. Some children will have these symptoms all the time. Contact with pets can cause hives or make eczema worse. Allergic children may also experience signs of asthma, such as wheezing and difficulty breathing. Exposure to birds can also cause other illnesses that can affect breathing.

How serious is pet allergy?

Severe reactions (anaphylaxis) are unusual. They involve difficulty breathing with wheeze or swelling of the mouth or throat, feeling faint or dizzy. Pet allergy may lead to troublesome, eczema, asthma, nose and eye symptoms in some children.

How do we diagnose pet allergy?

The diagnosis of pet allergy can often be made based on a history of a reaction to being around animals, pet owners or their clothing.

Positive allergy tests skin prick or blood allergy antibody (IgE) tests support the diagnosis of a pet allergy but should not be used alone as children can have positive allergy tests without getting a reaction. Tests are usually negative in children with delayed reactions. Skin prick tests are safe. They can be done in clinic provided that the child has not had any antihistamines for a few days. Blood tests are not affected by antihistamines, but results are only available a week or so after the clinic appointment.

How to manage pet allergy?

Avoiding exposure to pets is the best way to manage pet allergy. Although rehousing pets can be very upsetting for families, it may have to be considered when a child's symptoms are troublesome. Even when a pet is removed from a home the allergy particles will remain for many months even with good house cleaning.

Dog's with short hair and "hypoallergenic dogs", even hairless cats may cause symptoms.

It is difficult to reduce your child's exposure to animals that live in your home. Pet allergens are very small and can remain in the air for long periods of time with the slightest bit of air circulation. It also collects easily in furniture and sticks to your clothes.

Making bedrooms a pet free zone is recommended. If your pet can safely live outdoors then this will also help reduce pet allergens in the home.