

**Please note that these measures may not be enough to prevent allergy symptoms.**

**Be sure to always carry your child's asthma and allergy medication.**

Take the time to talk to your child about his or her allergies, and how they impact asthma. Explain their cause and effect relationship so that your child better understands what you do to protect him or her. For example, if your child starts to cough after touching a cat, let him or her know that the coughing may be directly related to the exposure to the cat.

For more information, please call:

Centre d'Enseignement sur l'Asthme (CEA)  
514 345-4931 ext. 2775

Clinique de pneumologie  
514 345-4931 ext. 3900

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This brochure will provide you with information about allergies and helpful tips for improving your child's health.



Allergies are the immune system's inappropriate and disproportionate response to one or many allergy-causing substances, better known as allergens.

Allergic reactions can occur in different ways:

- Allergic rhinitis (congestion, itchy, watery nose);
- Conjunctivitis (irritated, watery and itchy eyes);
- Skin reactions (rashes, puffiness, itchiness);
- Respiratory symptoms (coughing, difficulty breathing).

**Identifying and avoiding allergens are recommended as a first step before starting or increasing any allergy medication. This is the basic approach to treating asthma and allergies.**

If your child already suffers from one allergy, he or she is at risk of developing others. It is therefore preferable to take a preventive approach as **early as possible** to delay the onset of any new allergies. Be also mindful of cumulative situations. For example, asthma will be more difficult to control if your child, in addition to having an allergy to cats, has a cold and is exposed to **cigarette smoke** in a home where there is a **cat**.

## ANIMALS

Allergies to animals are quite prevalent. A person can be allergic to one or many animals:

- cats (the most common allergy),
- dogs,
- horses,
- rabbits,
- hamsters, rats, mice and other rodents,
- birds,
- cows and other farm animals,
- cockroaches, etc.



Depending on the type of animal along with your child's level of sensitivity, it can take anywhere from several weeks to **several years** for the allergy to develop.

For example, a child can live with a cat for five years without experiencing any problems but later develop an allergy to cats.

A person may be sensitive to:

- Animal dander, regardless of breed (the most significant allergen);
- animal saliva, regardless of breed;
- animal urine, regardless of breed;
- animal sweat, regardless of breed.

It does not matter if the animal hair is long, short, curly or smooth; it unfortunately causes allergies, and carries key allergens, such as dander.

Brief exposure to an animal can be enough to trigger an immediate allergic reaction, while longer exposure can trigger more subtle allergy symptoms.

**Here are some tips for preventing or decreasing allergy symptoms related to animals:**

Parting with your pet is the best solution. Give your pet away to someone whom you know, or take the time to find a loving adoptive family. Once your pet has been removed from the household, it will take several months before your child feels better because the allergens that originated from the animal will still be present in your home (couches, carpets, curtains, etc.) for many months even after the animal has been removed.

- Clean your home thoroughly.
- Do not adopt another pet even if your child's health is showing improvement, whether or not it is an animal to which your child is allergic.
- If exposure to animals cannot be prevented when visiting your parents or friends, take some precautions:
  - Remain outdoors as much as possible;
  - Instruct your child not to touch the animal. Make sure to wash their hands if they do touch it. Discourage any petting or hugging;
  - Ask your child to keep away from the animal's favourite spots;
  - Avoid sleeping in any home where there is a pet to which your child is allergic.