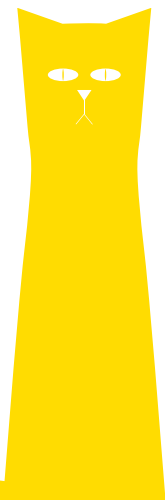


Cats and allergies



CATS PROTECTION
ESSENTIAL GUIDES



Things that cause allergic reactions are called triggers or allergens. Almost anything can be an allergen including pollen, dust mites, detergents, tobacco smoke, insect stings, pets, feathers and perfume.

The severity of a reaction to an allergen varies dramatically from person to person. Symptoms include:

- sneezing and a running or blocked nose
- itchy and watery eyes
- coughing and wheezing
- itchy skin



Asthma and eczema sufferers may find that their symptoms are exacerbated by the presence of an allergen.

Am I allergic to cats?

For some people it is fairly obvious that they are allergic to cats because they have an almost immediate reaction to a cat entering a room. In other cases it may not be so easy to tell, particularly if someone is allergic to more than one trigger in their environment.

If you think you or a family member might be allergic to your cat it is a good idea to have a trial separation to determine if the cat is the cause of the reaction. Cats are often singled out because they are easily identifiable but it is important to remember that they are just one possible household cause and that dust mites are by far the most common trigger for house-born allergies.

If you do not own a cat but are thinking of getting one, a simple visit to someone who has a cat or to an Adoption Centre will show you whether you are allergic or not.

Is there anything I can do to ease my symptoms?

There are a number of different things that significantly ease allergy symptoms, including:

- using anti-histamine tablets or nasal spray – please consult your doctor first
- designating some areas as cat-free zones, particularly bedrooms
- regularly cleaning rooms where the cat sleeps – vacuumed rooms should be allowed to settle as vacuuming stirs up allergens
- grooming your cat outdoors and wiping him with a damp cloth
- washing your cat's bed regularly

In tests, Petal Cleanse (Biolife International) alleviated the symptoms of 90 per cent of sufferers. For more information on Petal Cleanse, and many other products endorsed by Allergy UK, visit its website www.allergyuk.org or phone its helpline on 01322 619 898.

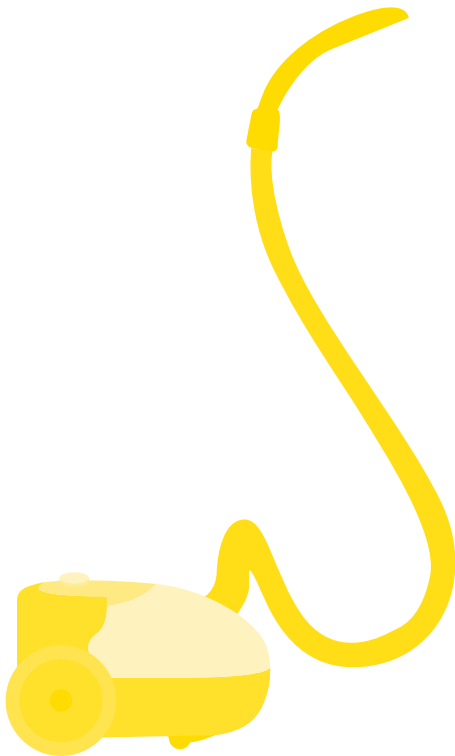
Breeds of cat

Certain breeds and even certain cats, are better than others for allergy sufferers because of their fur – trial and error is the only way to tell if this is the case for you. However, bear in mind that it is a cat's skin cells that are usually the trigger for allergy sufferers, not the fur.

Cats Protection does not condone the creation of hypoallergenic cats. The money spent on just one of these engineered cats could help so many others.

Can I get a cat if I am allergic?

If you still want a cat even though you have a reaction to them then your symptoms are probably mild to moderate and therefore manageable via the steps outlined in this leaflet. Some people find that repeated exposure to the same cat or cats over time banishes their allergic reaction altogether.

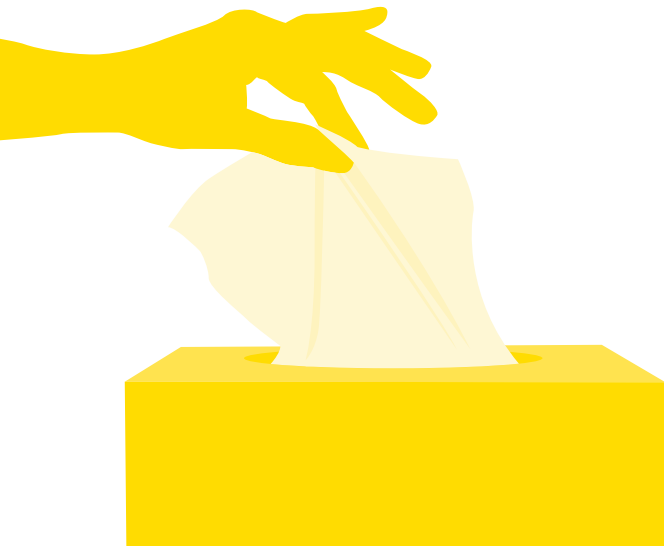


Should I keep my cat?

The answer to this varies greatly from person to person. First you must make sure that it is the cat causing the allergic reaction. You do not want to go through the upset of rehoming a much-loved pet only to discover that stress is what brings on your asthmatic attacks.

In the end, the decision about whether to get or keep a cat depends entirely on you and the severity of your reaction. In some cases the symptom-easing steps mentioned in this leaflet may provide enough relief for you to live happily with a cat. If not, it is advisable to avoid cats and seek advice from your doctor.

If you feel you cannot keep your cat, please contact our Helpline on 03000 12 12 12 for advice.



This leaflet is one of a range provided by
Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare
charity and helps more than 193,000 cats and kittens
each year. We rely entirely on public generosity to
finance this vital welfare work.

For more information on **adopting a cat**,
volunteering for us or **making a donation**,
visit **www.cats.org.uk**



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