

Patient Information on Cat Allergy

Allergy to cats is a worldwide health problem, with approximately 6% of the North American population having some degree of cat allergy. Persistent cat allergy can lead to more serious problems like rhinitis and asthma.

Cat allergen is a component of house dust. The dander is constantly airborne, sticky and found in public places. Even if there are no cats, dander is carried on clothing of people who have cats. In contrast to pollen allergy, cat allergic patients are exposed to cat allergen all year round. That the allergens are continuously airborne is evidenced by symptoms developing very quickly after entering a house with a cat.

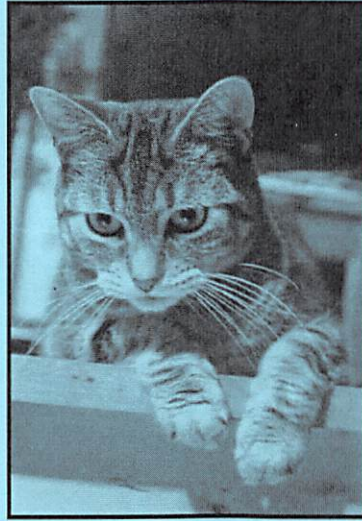
The Cause

It was thought that cat allergy was caused by dander or hair from a cat. Actually the major sources of cat allergy are cat saliva proteins carried by the hair and dander. When a cat grooms itself, saliva is deposited on its fur and is released when a cat scratches or moves and when humans stroke or brush a cat.

Sources of Cat Allergens

50% of patients with cat allergy have never owned a cat. The majority of patients acquire their cat allergy by exposure to animals in their surroundings - through neighbors, friends, and relatives; at work, school, or day care centers; and other everyday situations. Persons in contact with cats or cat allergen outside the home can also carry the allergen back into their home on their clothing.

The main sources of cat allergens in the house are fitted (wall-to-wall) carpets, beds, upholstery, cushions, mattresses, curtains and soft toys.



Diagnosis

Diagnosis of cat allergy may be straight forward when the patient develops symptoms whenever he or she is in the presence of a cat. The patient history may be misleading as certain cat allergic individuals can develop symptoms without any known direct contact with a cat. This is due to a high level of allergen exposure somewhere in their environment, such as schools, day care centers or the workplace. Skin testing should be performed to confirm whether or not the patient is allergic to cat allergen.

Treatment

Once diagnosed with a cat allergy, steps must be taken to reduce direct and indirect contact with cats. Avoidance of cat allergens is the first step in the treatment of cat allergy. Temporary removal of the cat from the home (to determine its contribution to a patient's symptoms) is often recommended but symptoms do not subside immediately (after the cat has been removed) and patients refuse to believe that their cats are responsible for their allergies. Removing the cat is usually not enough since cat allergens remain in the home for months after the cat is gone. Similarly, cleaning does not help very much, and ventilation does not have any significant influence on cat allergen levels.

Washing the cat every week with Allergy Canada's Allersearch Pet Shampoo reduces the shedding of cat allergens and reduces the allergen levels in the home. Keeping the cat out of the bedroom helps alleviate the symptoms.

Allergy Canada's Allersearch Pet Shampoo neutralizes environmental allergens while removing animal dander, destroying animal odours, and protecting from fleas and ticks. Its mild formulation, consisting of plant and root extracts, washes out easily.

Allergen Immunotherapy "Allergy Shots"

Allergen immunotherapy is the only available treatment with the potential to reduce allergic symptoms over the long term. Several well-controlled clinical studies have demonstrated the positive effects of immunotherapy. The symptoms of cat allergy can be significantly reduced with immunotherapy treatments.

Cat immunotherapy (allergy shots) involves administering gradually increasing doses of cat allergens that stimulate the patient's own immune system to become resistant to future allergic symptoms and reactions. The treatment is safe, well tolerated and has been shown to have long-term effects.

Find Out More About Immunotherapy

Consult an allergist if you have experienced allergy symptoms. An allergist is a doctor who is a specialist in the diagnosis and treatment of allergic diseases. Have your allergist prescribe the best immunotherapy vaccines available from Allergy Canada Ltd. To order Allersearch Pet Shampoo and other products, contact:

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