

Asthma and Pets

We get a lot of questions about pets and asthma at The Lung Association Lung Health Information Line. Pets are great and we all love them. Most people we talk to regard their pet as a member of the family. It's not surprising the love we feel for our pets may seem to outweigh our asthma symptoms. Unfortunately if a person is allergic to his or her pet, it can worsen asthma symptoms. In this fact sheet, we'll explain the options open to you if this is your situation.

What you should know...

Did you know pets can trigger asthma?

A "trigger" is anything that can lead to the onset of asthma symptoms. The dander (dandruff on an animal), urine and saliva of animals can be potential triggers for asthma attacks.

It's not about the fur

Since all fur animals have dander and all birds have feathers, there is no such thing as a non-allergenic furry/feathery pet. People with asthma are not allergic to their pet's fur or hair. Therefore, keeping your dog's fur or hair clipped, or buying a shorthaired cat won't do anything to improve your asthma. It's all about knowing which pets can trigger your asthma.

Any questions?

Contact **The Lung Association Lung Health Information Line** at **1-888-344-LUNG (5864)** and speak to a Certified Respiratory Educator, email info@on.lung.ca or visit www.on.lung.ca



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FACT Sheet

Pet triggers stay in the home - even if the pet doesn't

The triggers your pet releases stay in your home for several months. Cat triggers can stay for years in your mattress.

If you keep your pet, you'll have more work on your hands than the average pet owner

If your pet triggers your asthma, consider giving it to a good home. This is the best way to control your asthma. If you can't or don't want to give your pet away, here are some ways to reduce the triggers:

- Bathe your pet once a week. This will reduce the triggers your pet releases into the air. Note: the person with the asthma shouldn't bathe the pet!
- Keep your pet out of your bedroom.

Common questions we get include:

"Are there any pets that won't trigger my asthma?"

No. Cats, dogs, rodents and birds can all cause serious asthma reactions in sensitive people. Know which animals cause your asthma triggers.

"Is there anything else that I can do?"

Removing carpeting in a house where there are pets may help reduce asthma triggers. Otherwise, vacuum with a high efficiency particulate air (H.E.P.A.) filter frequently and try to keep pets away from carpeting, cloth covered furniture or stuffed toys. (www.epa.gov/asthma/pets.html)