



# Allergy, Asthma & Sinus Center

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## Animal Allergy

Allergy to "furry" animals is caused by the dander, saliva, and urine of the animal more than the hair. Removing the animal from the house is the most effective method of controlling an animal allergy. After the animal is no longer present, it may require an additional 3-6 months to decrease the animal particles to an acceptable level.

### **If you cannot part with the animal, the following suggestions will be helpful:**

1. Never allow the animal in the bedroom.
2. Keep the animal outdoors as much as possible.
3. Wash the animal

Smaller, shorthaired animals produce less dander and saliva than large hairy animals. Even with equal size allergy test results, cats are more allergenic than dogs as a general rule. Rodents such as Guinea pigs, Hamsters, Mice and Rabbits are also highly allergenic.

**There are no non-allergic furry animals.** Any animal with fur or feathers can trigger an allergic reaction. These include cats, dogs, rabbits, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters, ferrets, mice, horses, cattle, monkeys, goats, pigs, chickens, and birds. Of these, research indicates that cats are by far the worst offenders, followed by dogs and horses. While some animals seem to be more tolerable than others, there are no dogs, cats or other furry animals that do not cause allergic responses. It makes no difference whether an animal has short hair, long hair or how much it sheds.

### **What symptoms can you have?**

Itchy skin or hives after you touch your pet	Puffy or itchy red eyes
Frequently rubbing your eyes or nose discharge	Stuffy nose, Watery nasal
Short of breath sometimes	Difficult to breathe deeply
Coughing spells followed by wheezing or whistling	

### **What causes the allergic problems/triggers?**

- **Dander**: The problem is not with the pet's hair. It is the dander, or microscopic scales of dead skin (similar to, but much smaller than the dandruff on the human scalp) which pets are constantly shedding that is the cause (seldom, if ever, seen circulating in the air or laying on furniture and carpets).
- **Cat saliva**: Cats cause more severe allergic reactions than other pets. In addition to their dander, their saliva contains an extremely potent allergen that is deposited on their fur when they clean themselves by licking. The saliva dries on the hair and becomes airborne.
- **Urine**: Recent studies indicate that urine from cats and dogs as well as from ferrets, guinea pigs, hamster, and mice contain allergens, which can also trigger allergic reactions.