

## Pets and Allergies

Several studies suggest that early exposure to pets such as cats or dogs prevents the development of allergies and asthma later on. Pet exposure in the first two years of a child's life seems to have the greatest impact on preventing allergies. The reason for this observation is unknown. If you or your child already has pet allergies, however, ongoing exposure will make the allergy symptoms worse.

At this time, going out of your way to expose infants or toddlers to pets is not recommended. Children under 5 years are at particular risk for being bitten, scratched, or mauled by a pet. In addition, pests such as fleas and ticks can be a nuisance. If you already have a pet, you should not get rid of it for fear of developing allergies. If a family member is allergic to the pet, you may need to take precautions to avoid triggering symptoms. The websites referenced below recommend techniques to minimize exposure to pet allergens for those who are sensitive.

\*Resources (accessed 10/17/05)

Link to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. Statement on fighting indoor allergens

<http://www.aaaai.org/patients/topicofthemoth/1005/>

EPA Indoor Environmental Asthma Triggers – Pets

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/pets.html>

American Veterinary Medical Association - The Pet Allergy Puzzle

<http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/apr04/040401f.asp>

\* If the addresses listed above are no longer valid, try searching the internet by the title of the document and/or author