

Dealing with Pet Allergies

Thank you for reaching out to Maricopa County Animal Care and Control (MCACC) for resources to help keep your beloved pet(s) as part of your family. Responsible pet ownership is a community issue that requires community support. While MCACC provides resources and contact information in the spirit of helpfulness, they are not endorsements. Our community has hundreds of organizations that may have merit and could provide assistance to you and your pet(s) in a time of need. These organizations do not provide MCACC with updated information.

Please contact each resource directly to determine if they will be able to meet your needs.

Pet allergies are a common problem faced by 15 to 30 percent of the population according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Pet allergies are caused by proteins found in an animal's dead skin cells (dander), saliva, or urine. The good news is, there are steps you can take to reduce the impact of these allergens on your day-to-day life. The following information has been gathered from various sources and is not the intellectual property of MCACC.

Symptoms

- Chest tightness
- Congestion
- Coughing
- Eczema (skin inflammation)
- Facial pressure or pain
- Hives (raised, red patches of skin)
- Itchy or watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Skin rash
- Sneezing
- Swelling that looks blue under your eyes
- Waking up a lot during the night
- Wheezing, or trouble breathing



It is important to note that many of these symptoms are similar to the common cold. It is recommended that you consult with a medical provider to determine if you are experiencing allergies or an illness.¹

Diagnosis

Allergies can develop and change over time, so it is possible to develop an allergic reaction to your pet, when you previously did not have one. If moderate-to-severe symptoms persist for at least two weeks, it is recommended that you consult with a board-certified allergist. Your medical provider will be able to conduct a blood or skin allergy test to diagnose a pet or animal allergy.²



Lifestyle Changes

- Minimize physical contact with the animal, such as hugging or kissing, and wash your hands directly after.
- Set up pet-free zones, such as a bedroom, where you can escape the allergens.
- Cover bedroom vents with a dense filtering material like cheese cloth.
- Clean floors, walls, ceilings, and furniture frequently and vacuum often.⁴
- Frequently wash clothing and bedding materials, including the pet's bed.
- Use synthetic pillows, as feather pillows can make symptoms worse.
- Bathe your pet frequently using a pet-friendly shampoo.
- Consider removing any carpeting, upholstered furniture, curtains, and any other items that may attract dander.
- Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) purifier to reduce airborne allergens in the home.
- Keep the pet outside (only in certain climates in a well-contained area and under humane conditions).
- Look into hypoallergenic breeds.
- Use a trial period when introducing a new pet to the family to determine if any family members' have an allergic reaction.³

Medical Treatments

- Antihistamines are over-the-counter (OTC) medications such as Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra, and Clarinex OTC that can help relieve itching, sneezing, and runny nose.
- Nasal corticosteroids such as Flonase (now available over the counter) or Nasonex may reduce inflammation and control symptoms.
- Cromolyn sodium is an OTC nasal spray that may help reduce symptoms, especially if it's used before they develop.
- Decongestants make it easier to breathe by shrinking swollen tissues in the nasal passage. These are available in oral form or as a nasal spray.
- Allergy shots (immunotherapy) expose you to the animal protein (allergen) that's causing the reaction and help your body become less sensitive, reducing symptoms. Shots are given by an allergist and are often used in more severe cases for long-term treatment.
- Leukotriene modifiers are prescription medications that may be recommended if you can't tolerate nasal antihistamines or corticosteroids. Due to the risk of severe behavioral and mood changes, montelukast (Singulair) will only be used if there aren't any suitable alternatives.³

Sources:

1. <https://www.webmd.com/allergies/pet-allergies-triggers>
2. <https://aafa.org/allergies/types-of-allergies/pet-dog-cat-allergies/>
3. <https://www.healthline.com/health/allergies/dog#treatment>
4. <https://www.azhumane.org/resources-to-keep-your-pet/>
5. [https://www.netdoctor.co.uk/conditions/allergy-and-asthma/a6110/pet-allergies/\(image\)](https://www.netdoctor.co.uk/conditions/allergy-and-asthma/a6110/pet-allergies/(image))

