

What preventive measures can you take?

The best way to control dog dander allergies is to avoid contact with dogs. Here are some tips:

- ① Keep your distance. Do not touch, pet or kiss a dog. As best you can, avoid going to homes with dogs.
- ② Use your medicine. If you know that you will be coming into contact with a dog soon, start taking your medicine a few weeks ahead of time.
- ③ Be wary of visitors who own dogs. Dog dander can cling to clothing and luggage. So even if your house guests leave their dogs at home, they can bring the dander with them - and that can cause you a lot of trouble.

Of course, some of the above advice will not help that much if you already have a dog in your home. Even then, there are still things you can do:

- ① Clean thoroughly. Dog dander can get everywhere.
- ② Make your home easier to clean. Pull up the carpet. Get rid of the rugs and drapes. Ditch the dusty, overstuffed furniture.
- ③ Filter the air. Central air conditioning can push dog dander into every room in your house - even those that the dog is not allowed in.
- ④ Keep the dog out of your bedroom. Since you spend a third of every day in the bedroom, it is key to keep it as free of dog dander as possible.
- ⑤ Do not give the dog free rein. Protect yourself by making other areas of the house dog-free, too. Depending on the climate and surroundings, you can also consider keeping the dog outside as much as possible.



**ALLERGY & IMMUNO THERAPY CLINIC
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Dog Dander Allergy

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Allergy facts

- ① Allergy involves an exaggerated response of the immune system, often to common substances such as foods, house dust mites or pollen.
- ② The immune system is an intricate system that defends the body against foreign invaders like bacteria or viruses.
- ③ Allergens are substances that are foreign to the body, normally not harmful but can cause an overreaction in allergic patients.
- ④ Immunoglobulin E (IgE) is the antibody that triggers the allergic reaction.
- ⑤ Allergies cannot only develop at any age, but many individuals also outgrow allergies over time.
- ⑥ While environment plays a role in allergy development, there is a greater risk of developing allergic conditions if a person has a family history of allergy, especially in parents or siblings.

What is an allergy?

An allergy refers to an exaggerated reaction by our immune system in response to exposure to certain foreign substances. It is exaggerated because these foreign substances are usually seen by the body as harmless and no response occurs in non-allergic people. In allergic individuals, the body recognizes the foreign substance as harmful and one arm of the immune system generates a response.

What causes an allergy?

Allergy-producing substances are called "allergens." Examples of allergens include house dust mites, pollens, moulds, animal proteins, foods and even medications.

To understand the language of allergy, it is important to remember that allergens are substances that are foreign to the body and can cause an allergic reaction in certain people. When an allergic individual comes in contact with an allergen, the immune system mounts a response through the IgE antibody. Therefore, people who are prone to allergies are said to be allergic or "atopic."

A dog is man's best friend — that is, unless the man is allergic to his dog.

For a person with dog allergies, life in a dog-loving country is not easy. Dog dander gets everywhere, including places where dogs have never set a paw. So, how can you get through life with an allergy to man's best friend?

What causes dog dander allergy?

It is not the dog's hair or fur that is the real problem. Instead, people are usually allergic to the dander - flakes of dead skin. Dander is a particular problem because it is very small and can remain airborne for long periods of time with the slightest bit of air circulation. It also collects easily in upholstered furniture and sticks to your clothes.

You might wonder why dog dander has such an effect on you. People with allergies have an oversensitive immune system. Their bodies overreact to harmless substances - like dog dander - and attack it as they would bacteria or viruses. The sneezing and watery eyes are just side effects of the body's attempt to destroy or flush out the allergen.

What are the symptoms of dog dander allergy?

The symptoms of dog allergies are usually like those of any other nasal allergy. They include:

- ① Coughing and wheezing
- ② Red, itchy eyes
- ③ Runny, itchy, stuffy nose
- ④ Sneezing



Some people with dog allergy also have skin reactions. For instance, their skin might break out where a dog licks them. Others with more severe allergies might develop hives on their face or chest. People with asthma as well as pet allergies can have especially serious symptoms.

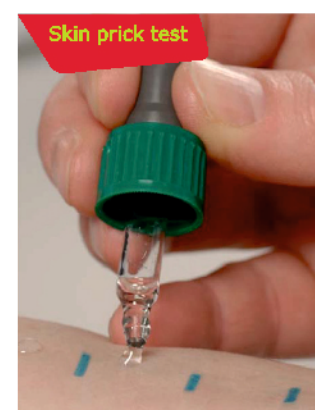
How can you diagnose dog dander allergy?

Your doctor can do either a skin test or a blood test that will detect allergen-specific IgE (Immunoglobulin E) to find out if you suffer from a dog allergy.

Skin prick test

The skin prick test involves:

- ① Placing a small amount of substances that may be causing your symptoms on the skin, most often on the forearm, only in exceptional cases the skin of the prostrate back can be used as an alternative.
- ② The skin is then pricked so the allergen goes under the skin's surface.
- ③ The healthcare provider closely watches the skin for swelling and redness or other signs of a reaction. Results are usually seen within 15 to 20 minutes.



How do you treat dog dander allergy?

Dog allergy can be treated with standard allergy drugs. Your doctor might recommend antihistamines, decongestants, corticosteroid nasal sprays. Allergy immunotherapy is another option for people with dog allergy.

Allergen immunotherapy could provide long-lasting benefit. You can "train" your immune system not to react exaggerated to an allergen anymore. This is done through a series of allergy shots called immunotherapy. One to two weekly shots expose you to very small doses of the allergen, that causes an allergic reaction.

The dose is gradually increased, usually during a three to six months period. Maintenance shots are needed every four weeks for three to five years. Immunotherapy is usually used when other treatments like antihistamines are not satisfactory.

