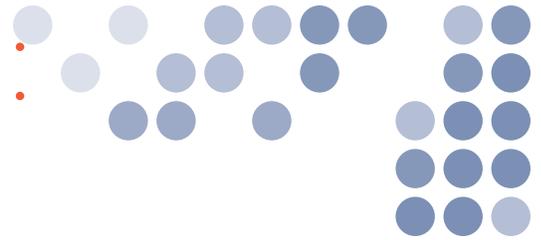


# Patient Information: Cat Allergies



**O**ver 10 million people in the United States suffer from cat allergy. Studies indicate that persistent cat allergy can lead to more serious problems like rhinitis and asthma.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to pollen allergy, cat allergic patients are exposed to cat allergens all year round. However, unlike other allergens, cat allergens are found everywhere, even in places a cat has never been. The fact that patients with cat allergies develop symptoms very quickly after entering a house in which cat allergens are present, suggests that the allergens may be continuously airborne.



## **The Cause**

It was once thought that cat allergy was caused by dander from a cat or cat hair. It is now known that the major sources of cat allergies are proteins carried by the hair and dander. These proteins are present in the saliva and sebaceous glands in the skin of the cat that become present on the dander or fur through the cat licking or grooming itself. The most important allergen is a protein called Fel d 1.

## **Sources of Cat Allergens**

Studies have shown that over 50% of patients with cat allergy have never owned a cat. The majority of patients acquire their cat allergy by exposure to animals in their surroundings through neighbors, friends, and relatives; at work, school, or day care centers; and other everyday situations. Persons in contact with cats or cat allergen outside the home can also carry the allergen into their home on their clothing. The main sources of cat allergens in the house are wall-to-wall carpeting, upholstery, cushions, mattresses, curtains and soft toys.



## Treatment

Once diagnosed with a cat allergy, steps must be taken to reduce direct and indirect contact with cats. Avoidance of cat allergens is the first step in the treatment of cat allergy. Temporary removal of the cat from the home in an effort to determine its contribution to a patient's symptoms is often recommended. All too often, however, patients refuse to believe that their cats are responsible for their problems because their symptoms do not subside immediately after the cat has been removed. Removing the cat is usually not enough since cat allergens remain in the home for months after the cat is gone. Does cleaning really help? The answer, unfortunately, is "no, not very much." Increasing ventilation does not have any significant influence on cat allergen levels, either. The use of chemicals may initially reduce concentrations of cat allergen, but only for about a week. Washing the cat every week reduces the shedding of cat allergens, but it is still unknown whether washing the cat will significantly reduce cat allergen levels in the home.

## What is Allergy Immunotherapy (IT)?

Allergy Immunotherapy (allergy shots) is a clinically documented treatment that considerably reduces or completely removes your allergy symptoms and the need for traditional, symptom-relieving medication. After three to six months, your need for drugs may decrease and your symptoms may become less severe. An additional affect of allergy shots is that it may prevent the onset of other allergies and the development of asthma. Also, the treatment has a long-standing effect after it is discontinued. New scientific studies have shown that results are maintained for 5 to 10 years after the course of allergy shots has been completed. Among the wide variety of treatment possibilities available today, allergy Immunotherapy is the only treatment that targets the cause of allergy and alters the natural course of the disease, which for many patients may lead to an improved quality of life. IT is not without risks. Possible side effects may include: itching and redness at the site of injection, local swelling and soreness 8-12 hours after injection. Although these local reactions may produce discomfort, they are not serious. Serious systemic reactions can occur, but they are rare.

## Learn More about Immunotherapy

Consult an Allergy Specialist. If you experience allergic symptoms, it is important to talk to a doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of allergic diseases. Based on your history and specific testing, your Allergy Specialist will be able to determine if you are a candidate for Immunotherapy treatment.



## Warnings and Indications for Allergy Immunotherapy (IT)

Hyposensitization therapy is a treatment for patients exhibiting allergic reactions to seasonal pollens, dust mites, animal danders and various other inhalants in situations where the offending allergen cannot be avoided. Prior to initiation of therapy, the clinical sensitivity should be established by careful evaluation of the patient's history confirmed by diagnostic skin testing. Hyposensitization should not be prescribed for sensitivities to allergens which can easily be avoided. As with all allergenic extracts, severe system reactions may occur. In certain individuals, these life-threatening reactions may be fatal.

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