

## Living with Indoor Pets

In one of the great injustices of life, we are sometimes allergic to those we love. That's the problem with indoor pets and allergies. Allergies to dogs, cats or other pets present a real dilemma. The solution shouldn't be getting rid of the pet (or the person, in the case of a new member of the household).

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a hypo-allergenic animal. Allergies to dogs vary by species, but any breed can cause an allergic reaction. Dogs or cats that shed less are available, but shedding isn't the main problem.

Thankfully, there are other options.



### Best air filter for pets

According to the Mayo Clinic, the substances most allergenic with pets are dander, saliva and urine. Dander is skin cells shed by dogs and cats, and we react to the foreign proteins in those cells. The same is true for the other sources, our animal friends make different proteins than we do and these are seen as invaders by our immune system.

Anyone who has a pet that is confined can easily see a buildup of hair, dust and dander that necessitates cleaning of their bedding. This is what is seen. What isn't seen, and what may be causing an allergic reaction, are the very fine particles that get into the air. As the animal moves around or when we disturb surfaces such as carpeting, microscopic particles are kicked up. The process continues unless those particles are removed from the circulating air.

To remove these allergens, a cHEPA/HEPAfast type filter is the best option. cHEPA/HEPAfast home air filters remove particles down to about 0.3 microns in size – this is important, because the very fine fragments are what we breathe in. Many will make it past our normal defenses.

cHEPA/HEPAfast home air filters are rated based on how much air they allow through and how well they trap small particles. Be careful though. When selecting a HEPA type filter, there is no naming standard – only those that are certified should be purchased. The best air filter for pets

will be certified as removing 99.97% of airborne contaminants 0.3 microns or larger. Essentially, this means that of 10,000 microscopic bits of dander that flow through a HEPA type filter, only three will get through. Our cHEPA is rated even higher, blocking 99.991%.

## **Allergies to dogs and cats**

These are the most common pet allergies. According to the Asthma and Allergy foundation, 60% of households share living space with either a cat or a dog. About a third of allergy sufferers react to these animals, and even more react to pollen or other substances that can get caught in fur.

Surprisingly, fur itself isn't the problem. Getting an animal that doesn't shed much won't solve most problems. Although dander, pollen and other allergens can stick to pet hair, it isn't the hair itself that causes the allergy. And it isn't just a concern for those living in the house. Guests may have allergies and pet dander can be carried in clothing, exposing those who don't even own pets.

Using a cHEPA/HEPAfast type filter accomplishes several goals. It removes dander and other allergens from the air, keeps these particles from recirculating, and stops buildup of allergens in ductwork or inaccessible areas of the home. Perhaps of equal value is protection for pets themselves. Dogs and cats can and do develop allergies to dust mites or other substances in the home. Since they spend the most time in the home, they are actually more susceptible to picking up an allergy. Constant scratching is the major symptom. If you suspect your pet has developed an allergy, you should consult your veterinarian.