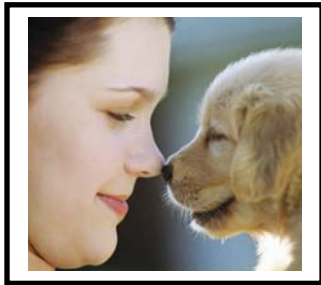


## Keeping the Fur From Flying

The dander shed by furry friends can aggravate a child's allergy symptoms. However, most kids would rather suffer than say good-bye to a beloved pet. Here are some tips for giving your child the benefits of pet ownership without worsening his/her allergies.

### If you're thinking of getting a pet:

They may not be cuddly, but cold-blooded creatures can be fascinating to observe and are unquestionably the best pets from an allergy-prevention perspective. Fish are a good option for allergic kids.



You might have heard that certain breeds of dogs and cats are nonallergic, but it's not so, says Laurie Smith, MD, FAAP, Assistant chief of the Allergy-Clinical Immunology Department at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in Washington, D.C. All dogs and cats produce dander, regardless of their breed and hair length.

### If your family already has a furry pet:

If your child's symptoms are severe enough, you might want to consider finding your pet a new home with allergy-free owners. A reasonable compromise for families who don't want to part with their pet is minimizing dander exposure by keeping the pet out of the allergic child's bedroom, limiting the animal to uncarpeted areas, and keeping it off upholstered furniture. If your climate allows, try keeping your pet outdoors for part of the day.

In addition, "there's some evidence that bathing pets once a week can reduce the amount of dander they shed," says Dr. Smith. On the other hand, sprays for pets' coats that claim to reduce the amount of dander "have no effect," she adds.

For good measure, dogs and cats should be groomed regularly, outdoors, by a nonallergic family member, and allergic kids should wash their hands after petting animals to avoid bringing the dander close to their eyes and nose.

