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*Learning about...*

## **ALLERGY TO ANIMALS OR BIRDS**

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An allergy to animals or birds often causes more trouble in the winter because houses are closed up and you are indoors more.

When you have an allergy to a pet you should give your pet away if your symptoms are troublesome, particularly if touching your eyes after touching your pet causes itching or swelling of your eyes. If you aren't sure if your pet is bothersome to you, you can test how much your pet causes you symptoms. Remove the pet from your home for at least a full month. Make sure the house is cleaned and well ventilated at this time. You can also go on a trip or live with someone who does not have a pet for a month to test this out.

### **When you are not willing to give your pet away, follow these guidelines:**

- Keep the pet outdoors as much as you can.
- Do not allow the pet in your bedroom.
- Allow the pet into certain rooms only. Keep the pet off furniture as furniture collects pet dander.
- Have another family member feed and care for the pet. Remember that clothes worn by that person contain dander.
- When visiting others with pets, ask if the pet can be kept out of any room you are in.

### **Medications:**

You can take medications to relieve or prevent symptoms of asthma, rhinitis or conjunctivitis caused by pets. These may be useful when you do not have a pet but will be exposed to one in other places. Ask your doctor about which medications would be best for you.