

HYPOLLERGENIC OR HYPE

A new study published in the journal *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* reveals that keeping a dog or cat in the home does not increase children's risk of becoming allergic to the pets.

Parents of young children frequently want to know whether keeping a dog or cat in their home will increase the risk of their children becoming allergic to their pets.


Led by Ganesa Wegienka, MS PhD of the Department of Public Health Sciences, Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, researchers followed a group of children from birth until they reached adulthood. Periodic contact was made with the parents and the children to collect information about exposure to cats and dogs.

When the 565 study participants were 18, they supplied blood samples to the researchers, who measured antibodies to dog and cat allergens. The results showed that being exposed to the specific animal in the first year of life was the most important exposure period, and that this exposure appeared protective in some groups.

Young men whose families had kept an indoor dog during their first year of life had about half the risk of becoming sensitised to dogs, compared to those whose families did not keep a dog in the first year of life.

Both men and women were about half as likely to be sensitised to cats if they had lived with a cat in the first year of life, compared to those who did not live with cats.

"This research provides further evidence that experiences in the first year of life are associated with health status later in life, and that early life pet exposure does not put most children at risk of being sensitized to these animals later in life," Wegienka concluded.

Source: Clinical and Experimental Allergy Journal If you want a truly low allergen pet, you might consider something with scales like a lizard or a snake. However, these types of pets aren't so cuddly! Here are a few breeds that are considered low in allergens. Even though these breeds do not shed hair like many cats and dogs, they still come with two elements that can set allergies off—dander and saliva. Low allergen pets should never be considered as low maintenance. Many need daily brushing and clipping and regular sessions at a groomer. 

Bedlington Terrier

These Terriers have curly woolly coats and look a little like long-faced lamb. Calmer and less boisterous than many other terriers, the Bedlington Terrier is known as a dog with a good nature and mild manners. They need plenty of exercise and require daily grooming and a visit to the groomer every four to six weeks for a clip.



Bichon Frise

These 'powder puff' dogs have a soft, silky undercoat and a coarse and curly outer coat. It is believed that the Bichon (French for small long-haired dog) was used as barter by sailors prior to the 14th century as they moved from continent to continent. Although not considered a retriever or water dog, the Bichon, due to its ancestry as a sailor's dog, has an affinity for and enjoys water and retrieving. On the boats however, the dog's job was that of a companion dog.



Chinese Crested

Although the Chinese Crested is considered a hairless breed of dog, one litter can produce both the Hairless and the Powderpuff. Powderpuffs have a very fine, soft double coat that requires frequent brushing to avoid matting. The Hairless is susceptible to sunburn, acnes and dryness.



Devon Rex Cat

Known for their wavy hair and slender bodies, it is believed the Devon Rex was discovered in the 1960s and is related to the Cornish Rex. Typically their whiskers are very short and their large ears are low on the sides of their wide heads. They are considered playful and people orientated, and are so sociable that they can be taught to walk on a leash.



Poodle

Choose your size from small to tall: Toy, Miniature and Standard – these smart dogs come in many coat colours. Their curly coat and its non-shedding properties are both a charm and a curse. Poodles do require regular grooming, and unfortunately more unscrupulous breeders have cashed in on the fashionable cross-breed, 'Oodles'. There's a saying amongst registered and ethical Poodle breeders: "There's nothing you can add to a Poodle to make it better."



Kerry Blue Terrier

The Kerry Blue has been used as a general working dog, herding cattle and sheep, and as a farm guard dog. History tells us that the Kerry Blue was developed to control vermin like rats, badgers, foxes and otters. The breed has a soft, wavy coat that comes in several shades of blue from blue-black to a light slate grey.



Maltese

A small dog, the Maltese is believed to have come from the central Mediterranean area. Their coat is long and silky and lacks an undercoat. They are considered extremely lively. Sadly, Maltese and Maltese crosses have been cited as one of Australia's most dumped dogs, and the main reasons they're surrendered are because they can bark a lot, are prone to separation anxiety, and do not instantly bond with small children.