



# Living with Cat Allergies

## Simple Home Solutions that Help

by Karen Shaw Becker

An estimated 10 percent of Americans are allergic to household pets, with sensitivities to cats twice as common as to dogs, according to the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. Most people with cat allergies react to Fel d 1, a protein found on cat skin, although other cat allergens are found on the fur, in saliva and even in their urine, reports a study in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

The tiny Fel d 1 protein attached to a piece of airborne cat hair or skin can linger in the air for hours—much longer than

a similarly released dog allergen. It's also sticky, readily attaching to human skin and clothing, and can even easily transfer to cat-free public locations such as a classroom.

Male cats tend to produce more of this allergenic protein than females, especially if they're not neutered. However, all cats produce the Fel d 1 protein, and it's unrelated to the amount of feline dander or shedding. Thus, no truly hypoallergenic cat breed exists, yet some breeds may be better for allergic pet lovers, say Austrian researchers in a study published in the journal *Clinical and Translational Allergy*.

Many people are able to build up tolerance to their kitty over time. Before starting a relationship, first ensure the allergy is not severe. If allergy symptoms are more of a nuisance than a serious health threat, some options can help minimize the problem at home:

- ✓ Consider making the bedroom of any affected family member a cat-free zone.
- ✓ Purchase a high-quality air purifier to clean the air of allergens and other pollutants.
- ✓ To prevent a buildup of allergens indoors, replace carpeting with hard flooring and drapes and curtains with non-fabric window coverings and if possible, avoid upholstered furniture.
- ✓ Clean the house often and thoroughly, including any surfaces that trap pet hair and dander like couch covers, pillows, bedding and pet beds.
- ✓ Wash bed linens at least weekly in hot water.
- ✓ Wash hands after handling the cat. After snuggling together, consider taking a shower and shampoo before retiring in order to avoid bringing kitty allergens to bed.
- ✓ Feed kitty an anti-inflammatory (grain-free), balanced and species-appropriate diet. Reducing or eliminating the allergenic and genetically modified (GMO) foods a cat eats reduces the allergenic quality of their saliva.
- ✓ Ensure optimal levels of essential

fatty acids in their diet to reduce shedding and dander.

✓ Bathe the cat regularly, taking care to use only a safe, non-drying, herbal animal shampoo.

*Karen Shaw Becker, a doctor of veterinary medicine, is a proactive integrative practitioner who consults internationally and writes for Mercola Healthy Pets (HealthyPets.Mercola.com).*

# 10 BREEDS FOR ALLERGIC CAT LOVERS

by Karen Shaw Becker



**1 Balinese.** Sometimes called the “longhaired Siamese” for its luxurious coat, Balinese cats nevertheless produce less of the Fel d 1 protein than other breeds.

## 2 Russian Blue.

Despite a short, double coat that is silky and plush to the touch, this cat also produces less Fel d 1 protein. They're known for their loyalty and playful personality.



**3 Bengal.** Bengals' uniquely fine fur requires less grooming than many others. Because they spend less time licking their fur, it contains less saliva and their dander is less likely to spread.

## 4 Devon Rex.

The soft, short and curly coat of this playful breed—known for remaining “kittens at heart”—may normally include bare, furless patches. They shed less than many others.



## 5 Oriental Shorthair.

The Oriental Shorthair encompasses more than 300 different colors and patterns, all with short, fine coats for minimal shedding. Regular

grooming helps control dander.

## 6 Cornish Rex.

Similar to the Devon Rex, but with a curly fur coat, the Cornish Rex has only a soft undercoat of down hair, compared with a typical three lay-



ers, including an undercoat, middle “awn” hair and outer guard hair, so they shed less.



## 7 Siberian.

Some people love the look of this long-haired, shaggy-coated cat. They also produce less Fel d 1 protein than other breeds, even those with far less fur.

## 8 LaPerm.

This cat's unique curly coat may help reduce the spread of dander.



**9 Sphynx.** A hairless cat, the Sphynx has no fur to trap allergens from their saliva. However, the Fel d 1 protein will still be present.

## 10 Javanese.

This breed has only a top coat, just one of the three typical layers of coats common to cats, which means less shedding and dander to spread around the home.



*Reference: Paul Ciampantelli-collated research, Mom.me*