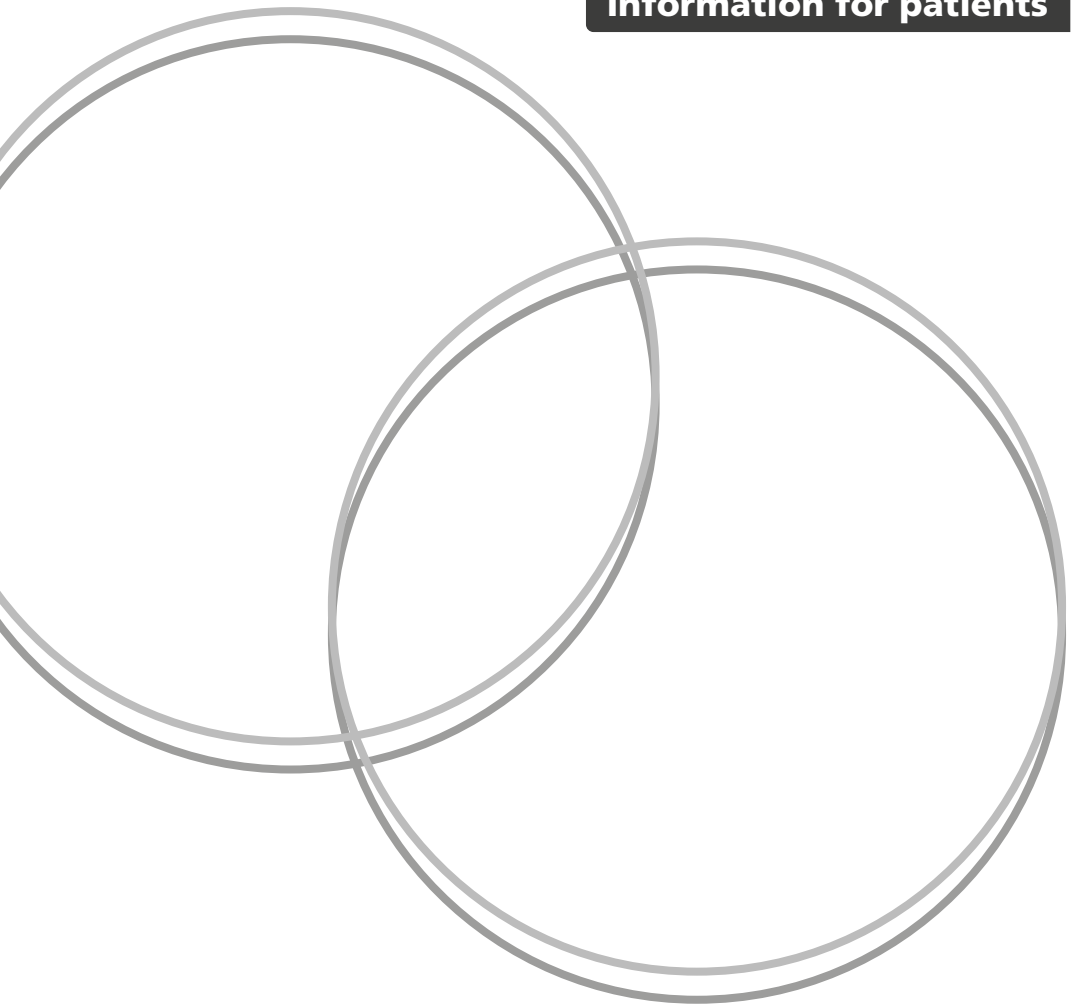
Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Allergy advice: Pets

Information for patients



ENT Outpatients
West Wing

Allergy to household pets

The skin prick test has shown you have an allergy to pets.
This leaflet gives you a little more information about this and some steps you can take to help control your symptoms.

What happens when you are allergic to household pets?

The most common pets to cause allergies are cats and dogs. People are allergic to specific proteins carried by pets in their saliva. As our pets wash themselves through licking, these proteins are transferred to their fur and are carried through the air on tiny particles.

When these allergens (the proteins which cause the allergic reaction) are breathed in or touch the skin, the body's immune system reacts by causing the body to release a chemical called histamine. This leads to swelling and irritation in the nose, eyes, throat and lungs. When it happens in the nose this is called rhinitis. The tendency toward allergic reactions is often, but not always, hereditary (passed on genetically from parents to children).

What are the symptoms of household pet allergy?

People who have a reaction to household pets are likely to suffer all year round and to have some or all of the following symptoms.

- A blocked and/or runny nose.
- Sneezing.
- Coughing.
- Itching (throat, nose, eyes).
- Wheezing.

How can I reduce my exposure to household pet allergens?

It is often difficult to avoid pets completely. The following ideas will help you to reduce the amount of pet allergen in the home.

- Keep pets out of the main living area and bedrooms.
- Restrict animals to well ventilated areas.
- Wash pet bedding regularly at 60 degrees.
- Vacuum carpets and soft furnishings regularly.

Remember!

- Your exposure to pet allergens is significantly increased if the pet is in the same room as you.
- The concentration of allergen is much higher in carpeted rooms than in rooms with hard floors.
- Cat allergens will stay in a room for many months after the cat has left.
- You can still be allergic to cats despite never owning one.

Useful information

You can get more information from:

www.allergyuk.org/living-with-allergy/indoor-allergies/pet-allergy/

You may also telephone the **ENT Nurse Practitioner** on:
Oxford **(01865) 231 182**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: ENT Service
November 2026
Review: November 2029
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

Oxford Hospitals Charity

Leaflet reference number: OMI 117077