

# Sniffle Solutions

June 1, 2010

## Ask the Pediatrician

### Can my pet allergies be passed on to my kids?

Although the tendency to have allergies is inherited, specific allergic sensitivities are not. After a child inherits the tendency to have allergies from her parent, she also has to be exposed to develop sensitivity. For instance, if I'm allergic to cats, I might pass the tendency to have allergies to my two kids: One might develop an allergy to grass and trees, the other to our dog. Even if two kids from the same family are exposed to the same allergens, they might not develop the same sensitivities.

There's very little difference between how pet and seasonal allergies develop in a person's immune system, but pets are more likely to cause problems because they're present year-round. Additionally, people who live with pets are exposed to very high levels of pet dander compared with relatively lower quantities of pollen.

If your child does develop a pet allergy, avoidance is the best treatment. Allergy shots are also an effective long-term treatment, but they're a big investment of time and money. Prescription nose sprays can offer excellent relief if used regularly. Discuss any issues with an allergist, who can tell you which option might be best for you or your child.

#### **ABOUT TODAY'S EXPERT:**

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