



## GETTING YOUR ASTHMA UNDER CONTROL: CONTROLLING ANIMAL ALLERGIES AT HOME A FACTSHEET FROM THE MOUNT SINAI ASTHMA PROGRAM

### Did you know...?

Exposure to allergens in cat, dog, bird and other pet animals can cause symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness in people who have asthma and are allergic to these animals. Animal allergens include the skin flakes (dander), saliva, and urine of animals. It is very sticky and can stick to walls, furniture, clothing and other surfaces. It can stay in your home for several months, even after removing the animal. Animal dander can move from one house to another on a person's body and can be found in homes where an animal has never lived. Just because you do not notice any change in symptoms when near an animal does not mean that you are not allergic to them.

### How do I know if I have animal allergies?

An allergy test by a doctor can help determine if your asthma and allergy symptoms may be due to contact with animal allergen.

### What can I do to control my animal allergies?

The only proven way to prevent an asthma attack if you have animal allergies is to **remove** the animal from your home and **avoid** contact with animals. However, if this is not an option, below are some tips to help control your animal allergies:

- \* **Do not** allow animals in your bedroom and keep the door closed at all times. Most of your time is spent here. By keeping the animal out of this room, you reduce the amount of allergen you are exposed to.
- \* If possible remove all carpets and cloth covered furniture, especially from those rooms where you spend the most time (e.g., bedroom, living room, etc.)
- \* Thoroughly clean all areas of your home to remove the sticky animal dander.
- \* Cover mattresses, box springs, and pillows in special allergy-proof covers.
- \* Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter or a double thickness bag to reduce exposure to animal allergen.
- \* Use of a HEPA air cleaning machine in the bedroom and living room may help remove animal allergens from the air.
- \* Forced heating and cooling systems can spread allergens through the house. Cover the air vents in the bedroom with air filters or cheesecloth to trap animal dander.
- \* **Avoid** going into any house or building where animals you are allergic to are present.

**Special allergy-proof covers for your mattress, pillows, and box spring can be ordered from one of these companies:**

- Allergy Clean Environments – 800-882-4110
- Allergy Control Products – 800-422-3878
- National Allergy Supply Inc. – 800-522-1448
- Mission Allergy – 877-662-5537
- Allergy & Asthma Technology Ltd. – 800-621-5545