

## Can Having Multiple House Pets Increase Or Decrease The Chance Of Child Allergy Risk?

Having multiple house pets actually seems to decrease the allergy risk of children, as long as the children have been exposed from infancy on. Recent studies have shown that children raised in a home with two or more cats and/or dogs in the first year of life are less likely to develop allergic diseases than are children raised without these pets. In fact, exposure to the allergens associated with pets very early in life seems to have a long time protective function.

This seems to fly in the face of conventional wisdom. Most people would believe that the less pet allergens in the home, especially for newborns and very young children the better. But studies are showing that exposure early in life not only protects from pet allergies but also grass, ragweed and dust mites. Pet exposure seems to cause the immune system to settle down and shift from allergic type responses.

The layman explanation for this strange turn of conventional thought is rather obvious. Our bodies have only recently been subjected to antiseptics and clean germ free environments. Television and other mass media hammered away at us about the dangers of germs, all germs. Commercials sold us products to help keep our kids free from germs and we actually strive to do this.

We forget that we would die without the help of billions of beneficial bacteria that co-exist with us in and upon our bodies. Our bodies have an immune response system that distinguishes from good germs or bacteria and bad. The bad bacteria is attacked, killed and or rendered harmless and removed from the body. This war goes on in our body twenty four hours a day. Occasionally things get out of hand and we come down with a cold or flu. That is all part of the beauty of the system because our bodies can more effectively fight against these diseases once we have had them.

When our bodies immune system has very little to do because we keep our environment too sanitized and clean, the immune system starts lowering its threshold of activation. That means the immune system kicks in at the least provocation and you have higher sensitivity to allergens which causes allergic response. It is even said that this same mechanism is partly to cause for arthritis in many cases. The immune system actually attacks our joints because it has little else to do.

Studies suggest that exposure to more than one pet the first year of life is more beneficial, probably because the variety of potential allergens are increased, giving the babies immune system plenty to deal with. The actual statistics were children 7 years of age were 70% less likely to be allergic to common allergens when exposed to pets as babies.

Scientists are trying to figure out the exact mechanisms that make this a reality. They think that pet bacteria release endotoxins that, when a baby is exposed, eventually shift the babies immune system away from responding to the common allergens.

Scientists can pick through this mystery as much as they want to but there is a common sense explanation to this. People, even babies, are just not meant to live in sanitized surroundings. Our bodies have spent too many thousands of years evolving and protecting us from the ravages of germs. Giving our immune responses little or nothing to do by having a germ free environment is setting this powerful germ killing machine against its own host.

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### About the Author

Mitch Endick is a short article writer for the popular pet site: <http://www.petpages.com>. He provides informative advice on all pets including dogs, puppies, cats, fish, reptiles, birds, ferrets, rabbits, mice and even pet bugs. Petpages.com also has an extensive pet classified ads section.