

THE ALLERGY & ASTHMA CLINIC

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NEWSLETTER

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Want a pet and think a hypoallergenic dog is the answer? Research studies are saying “think again”!

If you are thinking about adopting a dog and someone in your household suffers from pet allergies, you may have been told that certain breeds, including the Portuguese water dog famously adopted by the Obamas, are less likely to cause symptoms. But this may be just a myth, a new study suggests. According to a study recently published in the American Journal of Rhinology and Allergy, owners of poodles, schnauzers, and even Portuguese water dogs, widely promoted as hypoallergenic, have the same amount of a dog allergen known as “Can f 1” (canis familiaris allergen 1) in their homes as owners of dogs not typically billed as hypoallergenic. Researchers collected dust samples from 173 homes. The study included 60 breeds, 11 of which are frequently promoted as hypoallergenic. The researchers found that 94.2% of homes showed detectable levels of the allergen, and there were no significant differences between breeds.

According to Rohit Katial, MD Program Director of Allergy and Immunology at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Denver, the new study proves what he and others have been saying for a long time: “There is really no statistical difference in “hypoallergenic” dogs and others as far as allergen levels in the home. The allergen comes out of a dog’s saliva and their pelt and the hair is just a carrier as dogs lick themselves.”

However, the new findings don’t mean people with allergies can’t or shouldn’t adopt dogs. If someone with a pet allergy wants a dog or has a dog, there are many preventative steps that can be taken to help control allergies such as:

- Wash the dog regularly to remove allergy causing animal dander from its coat.
- Keep the dog out of the bedroom at all times, even when the allergic patient is not in that room.
- Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. This can remove much of

the animal dander in the air. Some HEPA filters can be attached to the furnace and may be efficient enough to clean the air in the entire house. However, a free standing unit which runs in the allergic patient’s bedroom should also be used and preferably should run 24/7.

-Visit a breeder or someone you know with the type of dog you are considering to make sure it is the right fit. Keep in mind the more active the dog, the more time you will spend outdoors with your pet.

-Work with your allergist to determine what level of allergy to the dog is present and how this level of allergy compares to the other allergies the patient may have.

- Consider immunotherapy to treat the underlying animal allergy. Immunotherapy, delivered as allergy shots or drops, can be remarkably effective in decreasing or even eliminating the actual cause of the symptoms. While we do not recommend that patients with allergies get a pet, we understand that it frequently happens and we have successfully helped thousands of patients become much less allergic, thereby decreasing both their symptoms and their need for medication. Keep in mind no dog is 100% hypoallergenic, but there are steps you can take to ensure you can continue to love and enjoy your pet! Please contact us if you would like more information of this subject.

eNO and Spirometry, important tests to help keep you breathing well

In our November 2011 newsletter, we described the importance of monitoring exhaled nitric oxide levels in patients with respiratory allergies. Equally important, especially when done in conjunction with eNO, is spirometry. Spirometry is a simple test to measure how much (volume) and how fast (flow) you can move air into and out of your lungs. Utilizing spirometry is crucial in the management of any respiratory condition but especially in those already diagnosed with or at risk for developing bronchial asthma. (Remember patients with upper

respiratory allergies such as hayfever and sinus problems have a 20 times higher risk of developing asthma than those without allergy.)

When outlining a treatment plan for asthma, it is important to take into consideration several points, including frequency of symptoms, how often a rescue inhaler is used, frequency of nighttime and early morning symptoms and how the respiratory condition affects daily activities, including sleep. While it is very important that these questions be answered, it is also imperative that we utilize diagnostic tools, such as spirometry, which will also provide us with objective data. Spirometry allows us to detect even subtle changes, often before the patient even experiences symptoms. With spirometry, many abnormalities can be detected in the early stages, when treatment is usually most effective. Spirometry can also help us assess airway function, as well as evaluate the patient’s response to a change in therapy, including changes in the type of or dose of medication.

INSURANCE CHECKUP

Now’s the time to complete a thorough review of your health insurance coverage and benefits. You will need to make informed decisions about your benefits as 2012 begins. Make certain that your plan allows you access to our Clinic and that we have accurate updated information. Your plan may require a referral. And remember, most insurance plans have a time limit for filing after which they may not cover your medical expenses. So make sure we have your new insurance information if you have any changes taking place in 2012. Ongoing access to the allergy and asthma care you require should be a critical factor in selecting your health plan for the New Year. If you have any questions with regard to your insurance coverage, our insurance specialists are ready to assist you in getting the full benefit out of your 2012 health plan to which you are entitled. Give us a call today! We’re here to help. *We all wish you and your loved ones a Healthy and Happy 2012!*