

What's Your Home's Allergen Level?

Our quiz could help you determine if it's your cat or something else in your house that's making you sneeze.

By Stacy Mantle

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Take this simple quiz to learn if you have minimized your exposure to household allergens and discover if you're doing all you can to eliminate the potential for allergies from cats.

1. My cat is a purebred or hybrid of a:
 - a. Not sure
 - b. Bombay or Russian Blue
 - c. La Perm or Sphinx
 - d. Siberian or Devon/Cornish Rex

2. The color of my cat's coat is:
 - a. Black
 - b. Calico
 - c. Tan
 - d. White

3. Most of my home flooring is:
 - a. Carpet
 - b. Wood
 - c. Tile
 - d. Concrete

4. Our window treatments are mostly:
 - a. Velour or velvet fabrics
 - b. Cotton fabrics
 - c. Wooden blinds
 - d. Plastic blinds

5. We have wallpaper:
 - a. Throughout our home
 - b. In our bathrooms
 - c. In our bedrooms
 - d. Who uses wallpaper?

6. Our cats are allowed to sleep:
 - a. Wherever they want!
 - b. In our bedroom in our warm sheets
 - c. In only a few rooms on their heated beds
 - d. In their safe, air-conditioned/heated enclosure

7. Our vacuum cleaner is:
 - a. Really, really old
 - b. A canister unit
 - c. A HEPA-filter vacuum
 - d. A central system

8. Our furniture is mostly:
 - a. Plush and soft that our cats love to lounge on
 - b. Smooth fabric or microfiber we just bought
 - c. A plastic milk crate and card table
 - d. Modern, swanky plastic

9. Our cat/cats are:
 - a. Rarely groomed and complete hairballs
 - b. Groomed and bathed regularly every few months
 - c. Brushed weekly, and bathed once in a while
 - d. Wiped down with a towel and brushed twice weekly
10. We use portable HEPA air filters:
 - a. In our living room
 - b. In our bedroom
 - c. In two or more rooms
 - d. In every room of the house
11. Our cat's outdoor enclosure:
 - a. What enclosure?
 - b. Our cats roam the neighborhood
 - c. Is heated and cooled
 - d. Is the cat equivalent of a day spa
12. Our cat/cats are:
 - a. Rarely groomed - they're self-cleaning!
 - b. Groomed in the kitchen or bathroom
 - c. Groomed in their luxurious enclosure
 - d. Groomed at the kitty spa
13. The windows and doors of our home are:
 - a. Old. They need to be replaced!
 - b. Sealed with towels placed in key areas
 - c. Single-paned and mostly sealed
 - d. Double-paned and air-tight
14. In addition to cats, we live with:
 - a. Rabbits
 - b. Horses
 - c. Dogs
 - d. Humans
15. Our landscaping consists mostly of:
 - a. Lots of grass, trees and plants
 - b. Grass, but no trees or plants
 - c. Trees and plants, but no lawn
 - d. Desert landscaping
16. We dust our home:
 - a. What's the point?
 - b. Once a week
 - c. Two-three times per week
 - d. Every day! We're dust-free!
17. We change our air filters at least:
 - a. Once a year
 - b. Twice a year
 - c. Quarterly
 - d. Monthly
18. Our cats are mostly:
 - a. Male, not neutered
 - b. Female, not spayed
 - c. Male, neutered
 - d. Female, spayed

19. I or other family members often experience:

- a. Sniffing and sneezing
- b. Coughing and sneezing
- c. Red, watery eyes
- d. None of the above

20. For our litterboxes, we use:

- a. A clumping, clay-based litter
- b. A dust-free, nonclumping litter
- c. Corn- or paper-based litter
- d. None. We have a flushing box.

21. We vacuum, mop and dust our house at least:

- a. Every spring
- b. Every few months
- c. Every week
- d. Daily

How did you score:

Give yourself:

- 0 point for "a" answers
- 1 point for "b" answers
- 2 points for "c" answers
- 3 points for "d" answers

Less than 19 points:

You could definitely use some improvement in your allergen-filled home. Even if you don't think you're allergic, you could be experiencing some effects from allergens. Are you feeling sleepy a lot? Do you have a lack of energy? Do you have a stuffy nose or sinus headaches? This could be due to the level of allergens in your home – and not just from your cat.

20-40 points:

You are probably experiencing a few allergy symptoms, but for the most part, you're working on keeping your home allergen-free. Try to keep cats outdoors in their fantastic enclosure or out of the bedroom. Do a "spring cleaning" to rid the house of allergens from other sources, and be sure to change the vent in your air-conditioning units.

41-63 points:

Congratulations! Your house is probably as clean as your felines! Enjoy your furry creatures and keep up the habits that have created a successful, allergen-free environment for you and your family.

Stacy Mantle is a popular author of pet books and the founder of www.petsweekly.com. She shares her home with 18 cats, three dogs and a very understanding husband in Arizona.