

If you or another family member is allergic to your rabbit, but you want to keep it, try the following steps to minimize your discomfort:

Step 1: Regular grooming. "With all rabbits, get in the habit of grooming them on a daily basis, five minutes a day," advised Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP — Avian Practice, in Florida. However, the person with allergies should not be the primary groomer, and/or he or she should wear a mask when grooming the rabbit.

Step 2: Restrict your rabbit's movement in the house. Keep at least one room "rabbit free," as well as the bedroom, where you probably spend 8 to 10 hours of your day.

Step 3: A pet shampoo formulated for use on rabbits might help. Wissman cautions against using human shampoos, which are too harsh for a rabbit, or overbathing. Rabbits "should only be bathed on occasion, not routinely," Wissman advised.

Step 4: Use common sense while handling a rabbit. "Don't put your face right in the bunny fur. Your immune system is sitting right there. You want to keep the rabbit dander away from those regions," Smith cautioned.

The Right Breed For You

Calebrese, along with the rest of her family, is allergic to a variety of animals, including rabbits. Yet, she counts many animals among her household companions, including a Blue Holland Lop. "We just took our time choosing a breed," she said.

Although this breed of rabbit worked for Calebrese's family, each person must discover which breed works for them. As a general rule, however, an Angora rabbit is probably not the best choice for someone with allergies. An Angora, or other longhaired rabbit, needs additional grooming and, therefore, will shed more dander, collect more dust, and lick its fur more often, thus spreading the saliva protein. Smith cites the Rex breed as having a lower shed count than an Angora.

To determine which breed is right for you, spend time with various types of rabbits, or offer to foster or pet-sit a rabbit in order to gain exposure to a variety of breeds. If you've had extreme allergies in the past, a visit to an allergist might be a good idea — a specialist can test for specific allergens.

Is An Allergy To One Animal An Allergy To All?

What if you're thinking of adopting that adorable rabbit you saw last week, but you already know that you're allergic to cats and dogs? Will you be allergic to a rabbit too?

"Immune systems are very specific. An allergy to one species doesn't necessarily mean to another," Smith explained.

Smith is highly allergic to guinea pigs and cats, somewhat allergic to dogs and hay, but not at all to rabbits. To combat her hay allergy she uses caution while handling it.

"Rabbits are a great alternative to cats," Calebrese said, because cats are one of the main sources of pet allergies.

Clips taken from an article found at <http://www.smallanimalchannel.com>