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## BARK OBAMA

### FIRST DOG NEEDS SOFT, HEALTHY SKIN TO BE ALLERGY-FREE

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President-elect **Barack Obama** faces many challenges, chief among them making good on his K9 campaign promise to get daughters Malia and Sasha the puppy they've been lobbying for — despite Malia's pet allergies.

Here's great news for the soon-to-be first family or any family with an allergic child: It's a misconception that you need to get a "hypoallergenic" breed. With a few simple safety measures, allergic kids can breathe easy around a mutt. (Say it with me, "Yes, they can!")

"Even nonshedding or hairless breeds have skin," points out veterinarian Dr. Shawn Messonnier, author of "The Natural Health Bible for Dogs and Cats." When doggie skin becomes dry, it releases more allergy-triggering dander into the air, so keeping Spot's skin soft and nourished is the real key to avoiding allergic reactions.



Julia Szabo

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Messonier recommends supplementing a dog's diet with drops of fish oil or olive oil, which will moisturize the pup from the inside. He also suggests washing the dog frequently with a chemical-free emollient shampoo such as Dr. Shawn's Pet Organics and Organix South's TheraNeem Pet Shampoo.

Frequent bathing with organic shampoo also removes other environmental allergens that could trigger an allergic reaction, such as pollen and dust mites, which cling to a dog's hair and paw-pads. "Being so close to the ground, dogs are exposed to more stuff than we are," Messonier explains.

A great way for kids to combine hand-washing with paw-wiping after playing outside is with Clean Well hand-sanitizer wipes. Clean Well contains an effective botanical germicide that was formulated for the company founder's son Connor, who was born with a compromised immune system. The boy, now 10, lives happily with his family's pug, Frankie.

Regardless of all these precautions, no dog, no matter how clean, should sleep in the allergic child's bedroom. There's just no need to increase exposure to any amount of allergens during sleep. This way, the child's body can build strength to further combat the allergens during the day.

Finally, White Housekeepers should deploy a reliable air filter and a powerful vacuum cleaner to remove microscopic traces of dander from the Obama dog — not to mention pet particles lingering from previous administrations!

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