

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Damper put on Obama Family Dog Quest

**Finding a hypoallergenic breed is a misconception**

(AP) -- Not to put a damper on the Obama family's canine quest, but allergists have a news flash: There's no such thing as a hypoallergenic dog.

Doctors who specialize in children's allergies say kids who are truly allergic to dogs probably shouldn't get one.

So Malia and Sasha, how about a fish instead?

President-elect Barack Obama has said his young daughters have been promised a dog with their move to the White House. And in his first post-election news conference, he announced that Malia "is allergic, so it has to be hypoallergenic."

It's a common misconception. In response, the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immu-



A puppy that goes by the name 'Ears' is a Peruvian Hairless Dog, a bald and often toothless breed that was popular among Incan kings.

nology issued a statement saying, "There is no truly 'hypoallergenic' dog."

Another misconception is "that people are allergic to a dog's hair, and it is falsely believed that a dog that sheds less will not cause a reaction," the academy said.

While some people with dog allergies say some breeds cause them more problems than others,

there isn't any scientific proof to back that up, said the academy's Dr. Clifford Basset, a New York City allergy specialist.

All dogs produce proteins that can cause allergies. These proteins are found in dogs' dander — which is dead skin cells, not fur — and saliva and urine, explained Dr. Elizabeth Matsui, a children's allergy expert at Johns Hopkins Children's Cen-

ter. Grooming and bathing can remove much of the dander and cause fewer allergic symptoms, and some breeds tend to be groomed and bathed more often. But it's that treatment rather than the breed that makes the difference, doctors say.

People with general allergies but not a specific allergy to dogs will probably do fine with a dog, said Dr. Robert Naclerio, an allergy specialist.

But for those with a true dog allergy, diagnosed by a skin test, "then I wouldn't recommend bringing it in," he said, "because you are going to have symptoms."

Those include a runny nose, teary eyes, sneezing and coughing.

Naclerio said people with pet allergies can "outgrow" them, though it takes years.

That said, the allergy academy offers tips for minimizing the problem. (White House cleaning staff, take note):

- Clean the house with vacuums equipped with special filters and double bags.
- Keep the dog out of the allergic child's bedroom.
- Remove carpeting, where dander also can build up.
- Bathe the animal weekly.

## Test Could Detect Future Heart Disease

**Even if patient is healthy now**

Americans focused on cholesterol and blood pressure as the main signs of risk for heart attacks and strokes may have a new tool: a simple, low cost blood test that researchers say measures coronary inflammation.

A major study presented at

this week's American Heart Association scientific meeting found that even among people in good health with relatively low cholesterol, the test is a strong indicator of future heart disease risk. Doctors look for elevated levels of CRP, a protein that can indicate inflammation.

Research shows those patients can reduce their risk by taking a statin drug like Crestor

or Lipitor.

Dr. Alison Fulmer, a Kaiser Permanente cardiologist, says she plans to use the test for CRP for those patients who don't show another obvious risk factor. The goal: find inflammation.

"It has been clear to me for some time that inflammation is the big issue, and cholesterol is not," said Dr. Fulmer.

Physicians have known for

years that elevated levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with heart disease, and that lowering those levels can reduce the number of heart attacks and strokes. Some physicians say they can see a time when a CRP test is standard practice for routine physical exams for patients in their 40's. The test costs \$20.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

## For Your Health

**Think Safe Disposal of Medicines**

By LARRY LUCAS



We all must do our part to responsibly protect the environment — including ensuring the safe disposal of medications.

Sometimes, trace levels of pharmaceuticals can be detected in our water supplies — primarily as the result of normal patient use or improper disposal. We can all further minimize this risk by learning how to safely dispose of old or unused medicines.

If you do not use all of your prescribed or over-the-counter

medication, you can take a few small steps to make a huge impact in safeguarding lives and protecting the environment by disposing of unused medicines properly.

With a few exceptions, do not flush unused medications or pour them down a sink or drain.

You can dispose of unused medication in household trash, but make sure to protect children and pets from potentially negative effects by pouring medica-

tion into a sealable plastic bag. If the medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), crush it or add water to dissolve it.

You can add kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds to the plastic bag or any material that mixes with the medication to make it less appealing for pets and children to eat.

You should also remove and destroy all identifying personal information from the prescription label from all medication containers before recycling them or throwing them away.

Always refer to printed material accompanying your medication for specific disposal instructions and consult your pharmacist with any questions.

I know what you're thinking — you thought flushing medicines was the safe way to go, right? You're not alone. Many of my friends used to do this to help keep medicines away from their pets and children.

We now know that there are safer, more environmentally friendly ways to dispose of unwanted medicines.

As parents, we all want to leave this world a little bit better than when we entered it — for our own children, and for their children. Safe, smart disposal of unused or unwanted medications is one easy way to do just that.

Larry Lucas is a vice president for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

## HEALTHWATCH

**"Get Me Through the Holidays: 10 Strategies for Coping with Loss"** -- Thursday, Nov. 20, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. This class will provide information on coping with a loss of a loved one during the holiday season and any other days that hold special meaning. For more information, call 503-512-8404.

**Introduction to Insulin Pump Therapy** -- Friday, Nov. 21, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., this small group class is designed to teach basic pump functions and use of basal insulin, bolus insulin and ways to troubleshoot high blood sugar levels. For more information, call 503-221-0161, extension 2254.

**Newborn Care** -- Thursday, Nov. 22, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., expectant parents will get a complete-head-to-toe look at preparing to care for their newborn. Topics include appearance, bathing, diapering, safety and more; \$45 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Breastfeeding Preparation** -- Saturday, Nov. 22, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., this class prepares parents for the first few weeks of breastfeeding; \$42 fee per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Childbirth Preparation Class** -- Wednesdays, beginning Nov. 26, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., helps first-time parents prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery through lectures, active practice and group discussions; \$85 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Yoga for Fitness** -- Dec. 10 thru Jan. 28, from 6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., this 8-week class teaches true wellness through a balance of

fitness and emotional stability. For more information, call 503-335-3500.

**Accelerated One-Day Prepared Childbirth** -- Sunday, Dec. 14, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., expectant parents to prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery; \$100 per couple (includes lunch). To register, call 503-256-4000.

**Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Informational Class** -- Thursday, Feb. 5, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. \$20 fee. To register, call 503-221-0161, extension. 2254.

**Peer-to-Peer Recovery** -- Peer-to-peer education recovery is a free 9-week course for mental health patients. Mentors who are recovering from mental illness are trained to teach coping strategies to others. For more information, call 503-228-5692.

**Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes** -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

**Osteoporosis Screening** -- An ultrasound bone density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

**Chronic Pain Support Group** -- meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

**Cholesterol Profiles** -- Keep an eye on your cholesterol and other indicators of heart

health; educational material provided. For more information, call 503-261-6611.

**Tenderfoot Care** -- Treat your feet with a soak, nail trim, buffing and massage from a licensed nurse at one of six clinics or at your home. Call 503-251-6303 for more information.

**Senior Aerobics** -- A low-impact workout geared specifically toward seniors. Call 503-449-0783 for current schedule.

**Better Breathers** -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For more information, call 503-251-6830.

**Leg Alert Screening** -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

**Cancer Resource Center** -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Free Body Basics** -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

**Heart Talk Support Group meets** -- on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

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