

SEPTEMBER 2010

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→ BY JANE BIANCHI



LABEL CONSCIOUS

When shopping for groceries don't let vague food claims fool you into thinking one product is healthier or safer than another. "Certain terms, like 'organic,' are strictly regulated by the FDA," says Mary Lee Chin, R.D., president of Nutrition Edge Communications in Denver. "You can be sure something 'organic' comes from animals that aren't given antibiotics or hormones, and is produced without using conventional pesticides. But most terms, like 'local' and 'natural,' are open to interpretation."

Local At supermarkets this could mean anything from "grown in your state" to "arrived at the store within seven hours." But produce from an outdoor market may actually come right from your town. It may or may not be organic, so be certain to ask.

Natural This claim tends to indicate that the food doesn't contain any artificial flavors or substances, but since there's no firm definition, make sure no chemical ingredients are listed. And salt and saturated fat are natural, so the description is no guarantee that the product is healthy.

Q&A

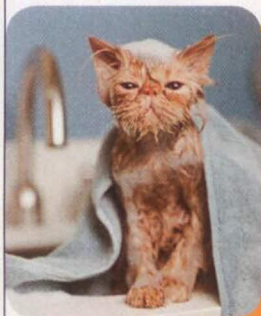
Q: Our family recently got a kitten, even though I'm mildly allergic. Are there ways to minimize my symptoms?

A: "Yes," says Vicki Thayer, D.V.M., a feline veterinarian in Lebanon, Oregon. "To stifle your sniffles, ask a nonallergic family member to do these three easy chores a minimum of once a week."

1. RUB-A-DUB-DUB Bathe the cat with a hypoallergenic pet shampoo, or at least a damp cloth. This prevents the buildup of an allergen produced in the animal's skin and saliva that makes humans sneeze. (She gets extra on her coat when she licks herself.)

2. COMB AWAY Give the kitten a gentle brushing outside or in a bathtub. That way the pet will shed less of the allergy-causing fur around your home.

3. CLEAN UP Vacuum the house, especially carpeted areas, where cat hair collects easily. Don't let the animal roam around places where you spend lots of time, like your bedroom.



DRINK TO YOUR HEALTH

Stir up these three simple drinks from Jackie Keller, a wellness coach in Los Angeles, to help alleviate common ailments.



Acid indigestion

Mix ½ teaspoon of baking soda with ½ cup of water (any temp). The alkaline substance helps neutralize stomach acid.



Sore throat

Fry half a lemon until the peel is golden brown (this softens the fruit, so it releases more juice). Then squeeze the juice and 1 teaspoon of honey into a cup of tea. Nutrients in the lemon can strengthen your immune system, and honey's antibacterial properties may help fight the infection.



Gas and bloating

Boil 1 cup of water. Add 2 cinnamon sticks, 1 piece of crystallized ginger and ¼ cup of peppermint leaves. Turn off the heat, let steep for 5 minutes, strain, then drink. Cinnamon has been shown to reduce gas, and studies reveal that peppermint and ginger both aid digestion.