

PATIENT INFORMATION BROCHURE

COCKROACH ALLERGY

WHAT IS COCKROACH ALLERGY?

- This is an allergic reaction (usually rhinitis/asthma) resulting from contact with cockroach allergens in people who have been sensitized.
- The first report of allergy to cockroaches was in 1943 in patients that developed skin rashes immediately after them (cockroaches) crawled on their skins.
- Today we diagnose cockroach allergy by skin or blood tests.

CONTACT WITH COCKROACHES

- There are over 3.500 cockroaches species globally with three common ones found in RSA.
- These are German (*Blatella germanica*), American (*Periplaneta americana*) and Oriental (*Blatta orientalis*) cockroaches.
- The presence of cockroaches in our homes undoubtedly causes more distress than nearly any other insect pest. One single female can produce up to 300 offspring, which in turn reproduce.
- High infestation and sensitization have been demonstrated in several countries with warm climates such as USA, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Egypt, Latin America and South Africa.

HOW DO COCKROACHES CAUSE ALLERGY?

- Sources of allergens are the proteins found in dried bodies, scales, hairs, fragmented dead remains and metabolic products such as faeces or droppings.
- Simultaneous reactivity to other insect-like allergen sources such as House Dust-Mite is frequently found. The highest levels of allergen are found in kitchens.

TREATMENT /AVOIDANCE

- The cockroach is extremely hardy and a good survivor.
- Cockroaches live in dwellings belonging to all ethnic groups and socio-economic classes of people.
- Populations of cockroaches are centered in kitchens, especially in the areas under the sink, and near the refrigerator, rubbish bin and stove. There may be a smaller infestation in bathrooms.
- Cut down on the food supply to cockroaches
 - Vacuum-clean or sweep floor after every meal
 - Keep rubbish in a tight-lidded container
 - Keep unused portions of dry goods in sealed containers
- Dry up their water-supply
 - Fix dripping taps
 - Clean the kitchen sink every night
 - Do not over-water house plants
- Make it difficult for them to hide
 - Keep old food cans, newspapers, magazines out of the house
 - Keep sink plugs over drains nightly
- Remove the dead cockroaches
 - Vacuum-clean around and behind all lamps starting from the ceiling
 - Clean inside air-conditioning units and ventilation tubing

For additional reading, visit:

<http://allergies.about.com/od/insectallergie1/a/Cockroach-Allergy.htm>