PATIENT INFORMATION BROCHURE

MOULD ALLERGY

- Moulds occur everywhere.
- The black spots on the walls and ceilings of damp rooms are moulds; the white and black furry layers on decaying bread and other foods are moulds; and mushrooms also belong to the mould group!
- Moulds release tiny particles called spores into the air, and it is these spores that cause allergic symptoms in people when they are breathed in.
- They can also cause symptoms when they come into contact with the skin.
- People are sensitive to these mould spores and may develop asthma, nasal symptoms, itchy eyes and eczema.
- Mould spores are released all year around and found in both damp indoor and outdoor environments.
- Indoors: kitchens (refrigerators), bathrooms, the soil of house plants and areas where humidifiers and tumble driers are used.
- Outdoors: rotting leaves, grass cuttings, compost heaps and seaweed.
- Mould thrives in warm humid places and spore counts tend to peak in spring and autumn.
- Up to 20% of asthmatic patients may be allergic to moulds.
- Moulds are found in higher concentrations in coastal areas and especially in the subtropical parts of the country (KwaZulu Natal).

COMMON ALLERGY PROVOKING MOULDS FOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA

Alternaria Alternata

- It is mainly regarded as an indoor mould
- Foodstuffs (black spots on food)

- Damp indoor areas(Bathrooms)

Cladosporium Herbarum

- Indoors (uncleaned refrigerators, moist windows and window frames, foodstuffs and in houses with poor ventilation.)
- Outdoors (most common coloniser of dead plants and soil.)
- The most common allergy provoking mould in South Africa.

Penicillium Notatum

- Spoiled food (stale bread, cheese, cereals and fruit)
- Vineyards and wine cellars.
- Used in the production of blue cheese.
- Peaks during winter and spring.

Aspergillus Fumigatus

- Found in soil, decaying leaves and vegetables, bird droppings and stored sweet potatoes.
- Its concentration in the air is relatively low.
- This mould is associated with asthma and conditions such as Farmer's lung.

MOULD CONTROL IN THE HOME

General control measures

- Ensure adequate ventilation; closed-up houses prevent the escape of moisture and encourage mould growth.
- Limit the number of indoor house plants.
- Dehumidifiers may be used if available (keep indoor humidity at 50% or less).
- Do not store firewood indoors.
- Ensure tumble dryer is vented outside during use. Try to avoid drying damp clothes indoors.
- Wipe down mould infested surfaces with bleach or apply mould resistant paint.

Kitchen

- Use extractor fans during cooking.
- Rubbish bins should be emptied and cleaned frequently.

Bathroom

- Clean and dry the bathroom surfaces and ensure adequate ventilation.
- Open the windows after showering or bathing.

Bedroom

- Replace fitted carpets with wood or tiles. Encase mattress and pillows with mite –proof covers.
- Remove indoor plants and don't store food in the bedroom.
- Dry condensation on windows.
- Wipe down damp window frames.
- Air cupboards and never store damp shoes, clothing, luggage or leather goods in cupboards.
- Curtains, wood paneling and wallpaper may support the growth of mould.
- Humidifiers and steamers used to treat croup will promote mould growth in the bedroom.
- A low wattage (40w) light bulb or chemical moisture remover will limit mould growth if placed in cupboards.

OUTDOORS

- Allergic people should avoid old grass cuttings and raking leaves (or wear a mask).
- Mould spores are most prevalent on dry and windy days.
- Avoid exposure to soil, compost piles, sandboxes, hay, grapevines and barns.
- Feed stores on farms are full of moulds.
- Correct water drainage problems near houses, as pooled water increases mould formation.
- Avoid camping or walking in forests or densely vegetated areas during autumn and winter months when there are a lot of dead leaves on the ground.

OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE

- Farmers, gardeners, bakers, brewers, florists, carpenters, mill workers, winemakers and wallpaper hangers are at risk for developing mould allergy.

- Faulty air-conditioners can spread moulds.
- Greenhouses and wine cellars encourage mould growth.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- There may be a history of mould allergy-related asthma and nasal symptoms.
- Mould allergy can be confirmed, if suspected on history, by skin prick tests or blood tests.
- Initial treatment would entail mould avoidance where possible.
- Allergic diseases that may have been triggered by mould, such as asthma and allergic rhinitis, require appropriate medical treatment.