

# 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 (*Blattella 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>