

# ALLERGIES

## PATIENT INFORMATION

**ALLERGY  
NO  
THANKS**

This brochure provides information about Allergies. It is designed to respond to questions most frequently asked by patients and their families.

### Department of Medicine



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## What causes allergy?

Allergy producing substances or allergens can cause a response in the immune system which results in the production of a special antibody (immunoglobulin E or IgE). IgE brings about an allergic inflammatory response or swelling of tissues. Exposure to only small amounts of the offending allergen in the air, skin contactants, foods or medicines taken orally can cause typical allergy symptoms.

## What is dust allergy?

Dust mite, a living insect from the spider family found in indoor dust, is the most common cause of allergy in Karachi. An allergic reaction to dust mite can cause a variety of problems like a runny or blocked nose, itchy, watery eyes, skin rash, sneezing, wheezing, coughing, difficulty in breathing and sinus infections.



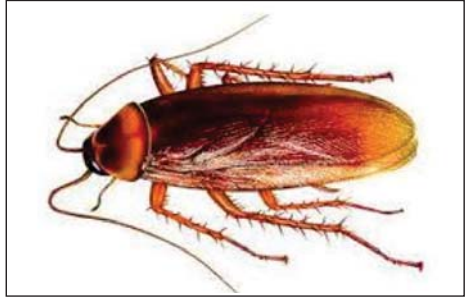
## Why does indoor house dust cause allergic reactions?

House dust is a mixture of many allergens. Its content may vary from home to home, but the most common allergy triggers are: Dust mites, cockroaches, molds, and animals. Outdoor dust usually does not cause allergy symptoms. Ways to reduce house dust allergens are as follows:

1. Remove wall-to-wall carpets from the bedroom if possible. If you are allergic, wear a special filter mask (N95) while dusting, sweeping or vacuuming.
2. Keep pets out of the bedroom at ALL times. It is best to remove the animal from the home.
3. Cover mattresses and pillows with covers made of special material which traps dust mites. Wash all bed linens regularly using hot water. (Dust mites allergy).
4. Do not leave out uncovered food at night. Use roach traps. Schedule regular professional pest control for cockroach, mouse and mold allergy.
5. Normal housekeeping may not be enough to get rid of house dust allergies.

## What is cockroach allergy?

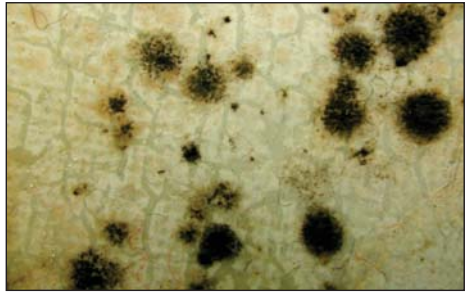
Many houses have dust that contains parts of cockroaches. You do not have to actually see cockroaches to have cockroach allergy symptoms. The allergen is derived from saliva, fecal material, secretions, skin casts, and body parts. It is at the highest levels in kitchens. Ways to reduce cockroach exposure are:



1. do not leave out uncovered food at night
2. use roach traps.
3. regular PROFESSIONAL PEST CONTROL measures.

## What is mold (fungus) allergy?

Molds or fungi are living substances which are found in the air in the spore (seed) form. Mold spores in the air can cause an allergic reaction in allergic persons causing asthma, nasal, eye and sinus problems. Molds are more common in high humidity climates like Karachi. You might not see it growing on the walls, but it may still be present in your home. Food products, particularly vegetables, fruits, and breads provide a good place for molds to grow. Molds in spore form become airborne and cause allergy symptoms.



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## What is pollen allergy?

Pollens are protein particles from flowers or plants like grass, trees and weeds which get suspended in the air. They come in contact with the eyes, nose and lungs causing symptoms in people who are allergic to them. Pollen allergy is common in areas with rainfall resulting in vegetation and greenery. Pollen allergy is usually seasonal.



## What is food allergy?

Allergy symptoms can be caused by allergy to foods. Milk, egg, nuts and seafood are the common causes of food allergies. Food allergies are more common in children up to 2 years but can occur at any age. Peanut allergy can be severe enough to be life-threatening in some people.



## What are skin allergies?

Allergic eczema and contact dermatitis are the most common skin allergy conditions. Eczema is due to a general allergy and contact dermatitis is caused by contact with skin with a particular allergy-producing material like hair color.

Urticaria or hives are red bumps or welts that appear on the body. Urticaria is NOT due to an allergy to an external substance. The rash can be associated with swelling of lips and face. Urticaria and swelling of skin can be caused by an overactive immune system. It has to be controlled with anti-histamine drugs until it resolves by its own.



In case you have any of the above complaints or conditions contact your family doctor or make an appointment at the allergy clinic.

In case of a severe allergic reaction, which can be life-threatening, go to a hospital emergency department immediately.

For further information, please contact

**Section of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine  
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Allergy Clinic Appointment: 3486 0130, 3486 0120