



GETTING YOUR ASTHMA UNDER CONTROL: CONTROLLING COCKROACH ALLERGIES AT HOME A FACTSHEET FROM THE MOUNT SINAI ASTHMA PROGRAM

Did you know...?

Cockroaches can cause symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness in people who have asthma and are allergic to cockroach. If you have cockroach allergies you are not just allergic to the live cockroach but also the cockroach droppings and body parts. When these things become part of the household dust, you can breathe them in and start to have allergy and asthma symptoms.

How do I know if I have cockroach allergies?

An allergy test by a doctor can help determine if your asthma and allergy symptoms may be due to contact with cockroach allergen.

What can be done to control cockroaches in my home?

Successfully ridding your home of cockroaches may take more than one approach. Below are some tips to help you get started:

- ❶ **Look around your home** – try to figure out where in your home the cockroaches are hiding and where they travel thru the house (e.g., cracks and small spaces). Look for live cockroaches, their body parts and droppings.
- ❷ **Repair** – any cracks or small spaces where the cockroaches may be entering your home. You can seal these areas with a caulk gun.
- ❸ **Remove food sources** – if the cockroaches have food to eat, it will be hard to get them out of your home. Follow these steps to remove their sources of food:
 - Store food in containers with tight lids
 - **Do not** leave *any* food out, including pet food
 - Wash dirty dishes right away
 - Clean up crumbs and spills quickly
 - Make an effort to eat in only one room of your home
 - Remove trash from your home everyday, or if not possible, store trash in a container with a tight lid
- ❹ **Remove water sources** – cockroaches can live a very long time on water alone. Follow these steps to remove their sources of water:
 - Repair leaks
 - Clean up wet or damp areas
 - Hang dish rags and mops to dry
- ❺ **Clean home thoroughly** – focus on areas that are not cleaned often like under the stove, behind the refrigerator, around countertops and in cabinets where food may have fallen.
- ❻ **Reduce Clutter** – cockroaches like warm places to hide. By reducing clutter such as stacked newspapers, magazines and cardboard boxes, you remove their hiding places.
- ❼ **Apply pesticides** – if you tried all the above steps and have not seen a decrease in cockroaches, you should consider using pesticides. Roach motels (baits) or gel pesticides are preferred over spray and powder pesticides. Frequent use of spray pesticides have been shown to have harmful health effects and can cause asthma symptoms.
- ❽ **Cover** – your mattress, pillows and box spring with special allergy-proof covers.
- ❾ **Continue** – to keep home clean. 1-2 weeks after applying pesticides, clean entire home thoroughly to remove any dead cockroaches and remaining allergen

Special allergy-proof covers for your mattress, pillows, and box spring can be ordered from one of these companies:

- Allergy Clean Environments – 800-882-4110
- Allergy Control Products – 800-422-3878
- National Allergy Supply Inc. – 800-522-1448
- Mission Allergy – 877-662-5537
- Allergy & Asthma Technology Ltd. – 800-621-5545