Symptoms of cockroach allergy can include:8,9 For those with asthma, cockroach allergy may also cause any of the following symptoms:8

• Difficulty breathing
• Chest tightness or pain
• Wheezing
• Trouble sleeping cause by shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing

There have been some cases of oral allergy syndrome (OAS) in cockroach allergic patients who consumed crustaceans such as shrimp.6 This syndrome is caused by cross reacting allergens in both crustaceans and cockroaches. Symptoms of OAS include the following:10

• Nasal congestion
• Ear infection
• Sinus infection
• Sneezing
• Runny nose
• Itchy, red, or watery eyes
• Itchy nose, mouth, or throat
• Postnasal drip
• Cough
• Itchy skin or skin rash

For those with asthma, cockroach allergy may also cause any of the following symptoms:8

• Difficulty breathing
• Chest tightness or pain
• Wheezing
• Trouble sleeping cause by shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing

There are roughly 4,600 species of cockroach, but only a few are considered pests, and just five varieties are frequently found in homes: German, American, Oriental, dusky/smokey brown, and brown-banded.5,6 Of these five, the German and American varieties are the most common species to cause allergies and to infest human dwellings.3,6 Reddish brown in color, the American cockroach measures roughly 30 to 50 millimeters (approximately 2 inches), and the smaller German roach, which is often carried into homes in grocery bags, is typically 12 millimeters (less than 0.5 inches) and is light brown with two dark stripes. Most species prefer warm, humid, and dark environments, and they eat both plant and animal products, as well as items such as paper, clothing, books, dead insects, and human food.5

Where is cockroach found?
Cockroaches prefer warm, moist environments where food is available.7 Factors that increase cockroach infestations include building degradation, and high population density.3 Active at night, cockroaches tend to live in groups. They often hide in cracks and crevices in walls, door frames, furniture, cupboards, steam tunnels, basements, televisions, electronic devices, drains, and sewer systems.7 Causing year-round symptoms, allergens can be found throughout dwellings in locales such as beds, furniture, and carpets, with the highest concentrations typically located in the kitchen.11 Even after extermination, however, cockroach allergens may remain in the environment for several months.6

Are there other allergens I could be sensitized to?*
Cockroaches prefer warm, moist environments where food is available.7 Factors that increase cockroach infestations include building degradation, and high population density.3 Active at night, cockroaches tend to live in groups. They often hide in cracks and crevices in walls, door frames, furniture, cupboards, steam tunnels, basements, televisions, electronic devices, drains, and sewer systems.7 Causing year-round symptoms, allergens can be found throughout dwellings in locales such as beds, furniture, and carpets, with the highest concentrations typically located in the kitchen.11 Even after extermination, however, cockroach allergens may remain in the environment for several months.6

How do I know if I’m allergic?*
Together with your symptom history, skin-prick testing or specific IgE blood testing can help determine if you are allergic to a particular allergen. If you are diagnosed with an allergy, your healthcare provider will work with you to create a management plan.
How do I manage my allergy?
If you are allergic to cockroach, your healthcare provider may recommend a plan that includes the following.2,3,4,7,8,9,12,13

Exposure reduction
- Locate and remove cockroach hiding places and food sources.
- Store food in sealed containers.
- Clean and remove pet food bowls after pets are done eating.
- Remove clutter.
- Exterminate and then seal holes and cracks to prevent reinfestation.
- Deep clean the environment once cockroaches have been removed to reduce residual allergens.
- Fix leaky faucets and pipes to remove an accessible water source for roaches.
- Vacuum and sweep floors after meals, and immediately do the dishes.
- Take out the garbage often, and cover trash cans tightly.
- Clean food crumbs from counters, stovetops, and tables.
- Use cockroach baits and traps to eliminate the pests.
- Check groceries, laundry, and furniture for roaches before bringing them into the building.
- Consider contacting a professional exterminator to implement Integrated pest management approach to remove facilitative factors (e.g., food, water), block entrances and, when necessary, kill or trap pests.

Symptom relief
Your healthcare provider may direct you to take one of the following medications to improve your allergy symptoms:
- Antihistamines are commonly used to reduce symptoms such as sneezing, itching, and runny nose.
- Nasal corticosteroids are used to reduce swelling in the nose and block allergic reactions.
- Decongestants can be employed to relieve stuffiness.
- Commence allergen immunotherapy as directed by your healthcare provider, with the objective to develop tolerance to cockroach exposure.2

View all references at the bottom of the online allergen fact sheets at AllergyInsider.com >

*These products may not be approved for clinical use in your country. Please work with your healthcare provider to understand availability.