



Ten Steps for Better Pest Control

Integrated pest management (IPM) is widely recognized as the most effective and least toxic method for managing pest control issues. Below are steps you can take to get rid of pests like mice, ants, and roaches. These tried-and-true techniques will work on most indoor pests and will help reduce your need for pesticide sprays and foggers.

1. LOOK AROUND AND PLAY DETECTIVE

Have a close look around your home to figure out where the pests are coming in, where they might be hiding (such as cracks and small spaces), and where they find food and water in your home. Make sure to check behind the fridge, oven, and under the kitchen sink – three of pest's favorite areas. This will help you with the steps you take below. And remember, the sooner you notice pests, the easier they are to get rid of.

2. REPAIR

Based on what you discovered when looking around your home in Step 1, start sealing cracks, crevices, and holes to help keep pests out of your home. Start by repairing areas where pests are the biggest problem, usually the kitchen and bathroom, and pay special attention to the places where pipes come into your home.

As a temporary fix, you can use duct tape to seal cracks and crevices. However, repairs made with caulk, plaster, or cement are much better in the long term. Before sealing holes or crevices, insert steel or copper wool into the holes to prevent pests from coming through. Weatherstrip around outside doors and repair any torn window screens. Put drain screens over sink and tub drains.



3. BE PERSISTENT

If you are a renter, place a work order with the landlord or manager and follow up with them until they complete the work. Keep a record of each of your requests, including the date and copy of the paperwork you filled out. This will be useful to you should you have to seek additional help.

4. REDUCE CLUTTER

Clutter can be old newspapers, cardboard boxes, old shoes – basically any items that you store and may not need. Clutter gives pests a hiding place, nesting material, and, since it often makes cleaning harder, it usually means that they will have more food. Clutter can also hide evidence of a growing pest problem.

5. STORE ITEMS PROPERLY

Throw out things you don't need, and organize the belongings you will keep. Try to store things at least one inch away from the floor and walls, so that you can see and clean around it. As much as possible, get rid of cardboard since pests love to hide in it.



6. CLEAN THOROUGHLY

A vacuum, bucket, mop, and scouring pad are the tools that will make pests unwelcome. Use them on a regular basis to remove any food sources like crumbs, as well as any droppings or markings that pests left behind. Clean under the refrigerator, oven, and kitchen sink first.

Vacuum under furniture and in corners where roaches have been hiding to remove any dead ones. A vacuum with a pointy attachment will make this task much easier. Over time, dead roaches disintegrate into roach dust, which can trigger asthma. Clean your house when people with asthma aren't present and won't return for several hours.



7. DENY PESTS WATER

If you find any leaky pipes or faucets in your home, use buckets to collect the water and empty them regularly. Hang up damp towels, rags, and mops to dry. Run bathroom fans to increase the evaporation of water after a shower or bath. Mop up any pooled water.

8. DENY PESTS FOOD

Keep food in sealed containers to prevent pests from getting to it. Use sturdy containers with a lid when possible. Reseal open bags of breakfast cereal, chips, crackers, cookies, and other foods with a clothespin or chip clip. Clean up crumbs and spills promptly. Wash dirty dishes right away, or at least leave them to soak in soapy water until you can. Keep a lid on the garbage and empty it regularly. Don't leave pet food out at night.

9. USE PEST BAITS

If you took all the above steps, waited a few weeks, and haven't noticed a decrease in the number of pests, you may want to consider using bait. Baits are a type of pesticide that will kill the pest by poisoning it, and they are designed to minimize people's exposure to pesticides. Examples of baits include roach motels, and rodent "bait stations." They can be found at most hardware stores.

Don't use pest baits unless you've taken the steps outlined above and still have a pest problem after waiting a few weeks. Baits can be dangerous, and should be used selectively and with caution. Read and follow all label instructions carefully. Place baits out of the reach of small children and pets. Store any unused bait in a locked cabinet or out of reach of children.

10. KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PEST CONTROL COMPANY

While the above steps have listed what you can do to get rid of pests yourself, some stubborn pest problems may also need the help of a pest control company. If you have a company visit your home, make sure that they are licensed, and the technician is trained. Contact your state's licensing agency to see if there have been any complaints against the company (in Illinois, contact the Department of Public Health at 217-782-5830). Make sure the company provides Integrated Pest Management services.

Learn More

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