



A healthy home is free of pests



A pest-free home prevents diseases and reduces asthma triggers.

The main idea

A pest is any animal that is somewhere it is not wanted. Many people react to the first signs of a pest problem by applying strong pesticides. But using pesticides may cause problems that are worse than the harm caused by the pests themselves. Pests should be controlled safely.

How it affects your health

Pests (such as rats, mice, cockroaches, mosquitoes, ticks, and bedbugs)

- May trigger asthma attacks in some people
- Some pests—such as deer ticks, fleas, cockroaches, and rats—carry diseases
- Although bedbugs do not carry diseases, their bites may itch and irritate the skin

Pesticides (chemicals designed to kill pests)

- May trigger asthma attacks, other breathing problems, nausea, and headaches in some people
- May have long-term effects, such as birth defects, learning disabilities, and cancer

How to know if you have a problem

- Seeing or hearing the pest itself—dead or alive—often in damp areas (like bathrooms and basements), wherever food is stored, and at night
- Droppings, hair, or nests
- Damage from gnawing on walls, wires, food, food packages, or newspapers
- Tracks (areas where pests frequently run, usually along walls, where there is no dust or dirt)
- Rows of red bite marks on the skin from bedbugs

How to fix the problem

Use integrated pest management (IPM) methods to control pests safely

- Remove food, water, and places where pests can live
 - Repair moisture problems, such as leaks
 - Store food in strong, covered containers, and keep dining and kitchen areas clean and dry
 - Take out trash every day
 - Clear away clutter where pests can live
 - Vacuum well and often
 - Seal cracks and openings in floors or walls, using copper mesh, brass wool, or silicone caulk
- Use the least harmful solution to solve pest problems, such as sticky traps or boric acid
- Use pesticides only when other methods fail: follow directions very carefully and store pesticides where children cannot reach them

How to learn more

- Stop Pests in Housing, www.stoppests.org
- National Center for Healthy Housing, www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm
- New Hampshire Bed Bug Action Committee, www.nhbedbugs.com/bed-bug-resources.php

For more information, call the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Healthy Homes Initiative at 860-509-7299, see www.ct.gov/dph/healthyhomes, or call Infoline at 2-1-1

