Protecting Our Homes

Our Schools

Our Children

Basic Steps to Indoor Pest Control
Without Pesticides

Brochure produced by the
New Jersey Environmental Federation and Clean Water Fund
with support from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Environmental Endowment of New Jersey and Bauman Foundation
Protecting Children From Pesticides

If you work or volunteer in a day care center, pre-school, or school, you are not permitted to apply pesticides or place pesticide products (such as Raid, roach sprays, flea sprays, wasp sprays, boric acid dust or ant bait stations) in the center or school. Even if they are products you as a consumer can purchase in a supermarket or retail store, ONLY licensed pest control persons can apply pesticides in public places.

If you have a pest problem, there are non toxic alternatives you can take. You can vacuum up pests, wash them away with soapy water or vinegar on a sponge, or place sticky traps or wooden snap-trap mousetraps in places that are out of reach of children. Try to find where the pests are entering and eliminate their entry way by sealing it up. You can use caulk or even stuff the hole with foam wrapped in steel or copper mesh. Duct tape also works well in an emergency.

Always follow the 4 Basic Steps To Pest Control Without Pesticides first! When you’ve tried all you can and the pest problem still exists, hire a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) licensed pest control company to assess the problem and to use “least hazardous” methods to control pests. This may include using least toxic pesticides or application methods that help minimize exposure, such as containerized baits or gel formulations.

The term *Pesticide* refers to a group of chemicals that have in common their ability to kill insects, plants, mammals, or fungi.

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2. **Take Action**
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   - Keep food in sealed containers.
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4. **Clean Up!**
   - Vacuum, mop and scrub extensively to erase pest trails. Pests follow these invisible trails as pathways back into your house.
**Why Kids and Pesticides Don’t Mix**

- The National Academy of Sciences and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) state that children are especially sensitive to pesticide exposures. They take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults and have developing organ systems that are more vulnerable and less able to detoxify toxic chemicals.
- Even at low levels, exposure to pesticides can cause serious adverse health effects such as a higher rate of leukemia, lymphoma, and brain cancer (chronic effects); and skin rashes, respiratory problems, nausea and headaches (acute effects).
- The safety of pesticides has not been established for children. Current regulations for “re-entry times” and food residue “tolerances” are based on 150 pound adults.
- A study published by the American Cancer Society concludes that children who have been exposed to household insecticides and professional extermination methods within the home are 3 to 7 times more likely to develop non-Hodgkin lymphoma when compared with children who have not been exposed to pesticides.

**Your Right To Know**

- At schools or day care centers, NO commercial application of pesticides can take place for the control of pests on lawns, landscapes, or in buildings unless signs have been posted at the start of the application and remain for at least 24 hrs. afterwards. The signs must be placed where they are clearly legible and visible.
- The applicator must supply notification of the specific date of pesticide application if a parent or worker requests prior notification.
- If you live next door to a person or you frequent a public building like a school, post office, or a business, you have the right to contact their pesticide applicator for information about the pesticides used there.
- If you suspect a pesticide has been misapplied or to register a health related complaint call the NJ DEP Pesticide Control Program at (609) 984-6568.
- In case of pesticide poisoning and emergencies call NJ Poison Control at 1-800-764-7661.

**How to Choose a Pest Control Company**

- Make sure the company is licensed by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.
- Make sure the company has experienced, well-trained and security screened employees.
- Better pest control companies will inspect your home or building for free in order to tell whether you need preventive measures or treatment.
- Better companies will explain methods of control and respect your request for “least toxic” options.
- For a list of Pest Control Companies that use least toxic options refer to www.beyondpesticides.org
FLEAS

The most common flea, which feeds on cats, dogs, and humans, is the Cat Flea. In fact, if you have a cat or dog, you will most likely have fleas too! Fleas are so tiny that ordinarily you don’t see them unless you look closely at your pets’ fur using a flea comb. They never go away “by themselves” and generally get worse if nothing is done to control them. Flea control takes time and patience, but can generally be effective without using toxic chemicals.

How they get in:
- Fleas hitch a ride on your pet, or you.
- Once in your home, fleas drop off onto the floor or carpet, laying eggs that hatch in warm humid conditions.
- Fleas can live 1 to 2 months without a meal and can survive 7 to 8 months with just one blood meal.

How they find food:
- Hopping from the floor onto you or your pet, adult fleas are in search of blood meals.
  - HINT: If you are getting bitten on your legs, chances are that you have fleas in your home.

When to take action:
- If you or your pet is scratching, or you see dried specks of blood that looks like coffee grounds (flea excrement) on furniture or a bed where your pet sleeps, it is time to take action!

How to Control Them:
- Vacuum Pet Areas
  - Once a week vacuum floors, carpets, furniture, crevices and cracks with a strong suction vacuum. Vacuuming picks up fleas in adult and egg stages.
  - Dispose of vacuum bag each time by wrapping it in a plastic bag and placing it in the trash. If you don’t dispose of the bag, fleas will escape and repopulate the area.
  - Professional steam cleaning may be a good investment. Steam kills fleas in adult stages, but may also cause eggs to hatch a few days later.
- Wash Floors with Hot Soapy Water
- Have Pet Sleep on a Towel
  - Fleas are found mostly where pets sleep. By having your pet sleep on a towel, most eggs will end up on the towel and not the carpet. Pick up the towel by four corners and wash it twice a week so eggs don’t have time to hatch.

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New Jersey Environmental Federation
For more information contact Jane Nogaki, Pesticide Coordinator, 856-767-1110 janogaki@eticomm.net
• Flea comb your pet
  • Flea combs come in all sizes and can be found at most stores that sell pet products.
  • Start at the head and neck areas and work back towards the tail. After each pass of the comb, check the comb for fleas.
  • Place the fleas (and comb when done) into a container of soapy water where they will drown.
  • Comb for fleas daily then once a week as the problem subsides.
    • Hint: you can monitor the flea population by keeping a count of fleas taken off your pet.

• Bathe your pet with a pet shampoo or soap
  • It is not necessary to use insecticide shampoos, as soapy water kills fleas within seconds.
  • Wash and tumble dry pet bedding on a high heat setting to kill fleas.
  • If your pet’s skin gets dry and itchy, the soap may be causing the dryness. Switch to another product. Repeat the bathing every week or so until the flea problem gets under control.
  • Try to keep your pet out of hard-to-clean areas like the basement, and areas that you find fleas most annoying, like the bedroom.
  • Since pets bring fleas in from the outdoors, consider making your pet either an inside or an outside pet.

Flea Control Products

Flea Repellants and Collars
  • Flea sprays and collars which use herbal repellents like pennyroyal, eucalyptus, rosemary and citronella can be purchased at pet supply stores or health food stores. These strong smelling herbs repel but do not kill fleas.
  • Do not use pennyroyal on cats, as it can be dangerous to them when they lick it off of their fur.
  • If you use a flea collar on your pet, don’t keep it on for more than five days. Check the skin for irritation and if redness occurs, remove the flea collar.

Brewers Yeast/Garlic
  • Found at most health food stores, brewers yeast helps repel fleas (1/2 teaspoon for a cat, 2-3 teaspoons for a dog). One chopped clove of garlic a day in the pet’s food also works as a flea repellant.

Safer Indoor Flea Guard
  • This flea spray is made from soap and is one of the safest products on the market. It kills adult fleas. Spray where your pet commonly sleeps or where fleas have been spotted and then vacuum 30 minutes later. It is a short term control for adult fleas and can be found at most garden or pet supply stores for about $8.

Methoprene
  • Methoprene is a chemical insect growth regulator. It stops juvenile fleas from maturing into adults. It breaks down quickly and is less toxic to animals and humans than pyrethrin. It is found in flea collars. (Hertz “Control” flea collar can be found at most grocery stores for about $7)

Professional Services
  • If you can’t bring the flea problem under control yourself, you may wish to contract a pest control company. A professional treatment should only be done twice at the most– not on a monthly basis. Professional products are more concentrated than products you can purchase in the store. The house should be ventilated for 48 hours after a flea spray or bomb treatment.
Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes are annoying insects. They bite, they buzz, they can transmit diseases such as Viral Encephalitis, West Nile Virus and dog heartworm, but they DO NOT transmit the AIDS virus. As soon as the weather turns warm, mosquitoes become active. You can prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your house without using poisons.

How they Begin:
Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water. After passing through the larval and pupal stage, they emerge as adults. The entire process takes 7 to 10 days. Mosquitoes must have water to breed in, and the water must last 7 days. As adults, female mosquitoes fly about looking for a blood meal of human or animal blood. They live from 3-6 weeks, and they blood-feed several times during that period. Only females bite humans or animals. The males don’t bite at all.

Here are some favorite places for mosquitoes to lay their eggs:

Favorite places for Mosquitoes to lay their Eggs:
- Air conditioning drain outlets
- Bird baths
- Cans, jars or other containers
- Clogged roof gutters
- Dripping outdoor faucets
- Leaky pipe joints
- Leaf filled drains
- Ornamental ponds
- Over-watered lawns
- Plastic wading pools
- Rain barrels
- Saucers under potted plants
- Standing water in tire ruts or puddles
- Tree stumps
- Utility meters
- Watering cans, buckets
- Water dishes for pets
- Wheelbarrows

How they get in:
- Adult mosquitoes can travel distances up to a mile away. They fly into your house through holes in screens or through open doors or unscreened open windows.

How to Control Them:
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Check carefully for standing water. Drain standing water from buckets, saucers, wheelbarrows, barrels, garbage cans, and other mosquito breeding grounds.
- If you keep bird baths or wading pools in your yard, change the water every 4 days.
- Clean out gutters. Drain flat roofs.
- If you collect rainwater in a barrel, cover it.
- Use yellow, non attractive light bulbs at entrances to your home
- Encourage mosquito-eating birds and bats by installing bat-houses or martin-houses in your neighborhood.
- Use biological controls such as BTI or mosquito eating fish in ponds or wet areas near your home.

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How To Protect Yourself From Biting Bugs:

- Wear loose, light colored protective clothing when outdoors (long sleeved shirt, long pants, socks). Mosquitoes are naturally attracted to dark-colored animals.
- Apply mosquito repellent to clothing, if necessary.

Be Cautious With Repellents...

Many common repellents such as Off! And Cutter products contain DEET, which can damage the nervous system and irritate skin and eyes. Look for non-DEET products such as Bug-Off, and Avon’s Skin-So-Soft. Never put repellents on infants or young children’s skin, as they are easily absorbed into the blood stream.

Natural Repellents

- Natural Oils:
  - Oils of citronella or eucalyptus can be purchased in a health food or natural food store.
- Vinegar:
  - Dip a cotton ball in vinegar and rub it over exposed skin. The vinegar evaporates quickly but the repellent action lasts a while.
- Garlic:
  - Some people find that eating lots of garlic repels insects. Garlic juice sprays are available in lawn and garden catalogs to spray in outside yard areas.

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<tr>
<th>Product</th>
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<th>Where to buy it</th>
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<tr>
<td>BTI pellets or disks that float</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>The Natural Gardener:</td>
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<td>on ponds to kill mosquito larvae</td>
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<td>Bat-houses</td>
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<td>812-537-8650</td>
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Rats and Mice

The Norway rat, roof rat, and the common house mouse are the most common house pest rodents.

**The Norway rat** is usually brown and about 12-18 inches long. The Norway rat's tail is shorter than the head and body. It has small ears, and a blunt nose. It is also known as the Sewer rat or Brown rat. It is found all over the United States, mostly in sewers. It usually nests in basements and lower portions of buildings. It burrows in soil and is active at night. It is a fair climber, and a good swimmer. It eats almost any human food, and leaves 30-180 droppings per day, has 3-7 litters a year, and lives about 18 months. The Norway Rat weighs about one pound.

**The roof rat** is usually black, and 13-17 inches long. It is found in coastal areas. Roof rats have pointy noses, large ears and eyes. It’s tail is longer than its head and body. The roof rat usually enters and nests in upper portions of buildings. It may nest outside in trees or ivy. It is an excellent climber, and is active at night. It eats seeds, fruits, vegetables, grains, and eggs. The roof rat leaves 30-180 droppings per day, has 3-7 litters a year and lives about 18 months.

**The house mouse** is gray, with a body 3-4 inches long and a tail 3-4 inches long. It has large prominent ears, and weighs about an ounce. Mice nest in any portion of a building near food. They travel about 50 feet from their nest. They also live outdoors in brush piles, wood piles, or leaf piles. They are active mostly at night, and they nibble small amounts of food frequently. Any kind of human food will be eaten by mice. They leave about 50 droppings per day. One mouse can produce 8 litters per year, and lives about 18 months.

**Tips to Prevent Mice and Rats**

Holes and potential entry ways into the house need to be sealed with caulk, weather stripping, or steel mesh. This will help keep rodents out. Remove hiding places outdoors too by cleaning up trash, recycling and unused items. Raise woodpiles off the ground and keep away from the house. Seal all food containers. Fix water leaks and screen off areas around faucets, pipes or vents where rats and mice can enter with wire mesh.

- Fix broken windows, screens and doors.
- Close every possible entry to your home. (windows, vents, doors)
- Remove trash from basement, garage and shed.
- Keep your home free of litter.
- Cut weeds, removing brush.
- Remove fruits, vegetables, and bird seeds from the ground.
- Remove pet food before dark, or keep it inside.
- Keep yard free of pet manure and garbage.
- Drain and wrap garbage before putting it into can.
- Use steel garbage cans with tight covers.
- Store any food, including pet food, in rat-proof containers.
- Prune tree limbs so that they do not touch the home.

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Trapping Mice and Rats

Traps are less dangerous for people and animals than chemical poisons. They also provide the caught rodent as proof of success! Snap traps, glue boards, and live traps are effective. How they are placed is very important.

How to Use a Trap:

- The trap size should fit the size of the pest. (Rat traps are larger than mouse traps)
- A few traps for each pest should be used.
- Bait can be peanut butter mixed with rolled oats, cheese, fruit, bread, or meat.
- Used bloody traps are more effective than unused clean ones!
- Check the traps every day to avoid dead pests rotting in your home (or those caught in a live trap suffering).
- Traps should be placed along paths that the rats or mice run. If you are not sure where they run, place some unset traps out (with bait) and see if the bait is eaten. If the bait disappears, you have found the right location! Now you can set the trap, using new bait.
- Place the traps end to end along a wall with the baits facing out or space them a few feet apart forming a “T” with the wall (but not touching the wall) with the baits closest to the wall.
- Wear rubber gloves when handling the traps to avoid leaving a human smell on them.
- Dispose of dead rodents by wrapping them in newspaper and placing in the garbage can.
- Wash up with soap and hot water afterwards.
- If droppings are found in cabinets or drawers, mop up these areas with a solution of soapy, hot water mixed with a couple drops of household bleach.

Types of Traps:

- Snap Traps:
  - Snap traps come in different sizes for both rats and mice and can be found at most supermarkets and hardware stores for about $1 or $2.

- Glue Boards:
  - Glue boards can be used if you don’t want to deal with setting the snap trap. They are good for indoor use. Peel off the paper to reveal the sticky surface, and place along the wall where you suspect the mouse/rat is traveling. The trapped rodent does not die immediately, and is likely to suffer until it dies. Dispose of the whole rodent and glue board by wrapping it in newspaper and putting it in the garbage. It is messy to remove the rodent and reuse the glue board, and possibly dangerous if the rodent bites you.
  - Glue boards can be found at most supermarkets and hardware stores for about $2.

- Live Traps:
  - Live traps are available in the single or multi-catch type. With these traps, you do the killing or the releasing. If you release the rodent, do so at least a mile away or they will return.
  - Victor “Tin Cat” humane, multiple catch mouse trap can be found for about $16 at most hardware stores. The “Smart Mouse Trap” from Seabright Laboratories live, single catch trap can be ordered through the mail or found in some health food stores for about $10.
Ants

Ants are frequent pests in kitchens and bathrooms. They are pesky, but fortunately do not bite or transmit disease. There are many kinds of ants. The ones most commonly found in homes are Little Black Ants and Small Honey Ants. Some ants prefer sweets, and some prefer grease! Usually they live outside, and only come into your house for one thing, FOOD! Ants make trails and follow them afterwards. They take food back to their friends in the nest, which may be outdoors, or inside your walls.

How they get in:
• Ants get inside by walking along plumbing pipes or entering through cracks in the wall or concrete.
• Once inside, they leave a trail back to where they came from and they travel this route back and forth.

How they find food:
• They eat sweets, grease, oils, and proteins, including other dead insects.
• They love crumbs that fall to the floor, pet food that is left out in bowls and food spills left in cabinets, sinks, and on stoves.

How to Control Them:
• Try to tolerate some ants. Ants can be beneficial when they are in the right place! Outdoors!
• Use soapy water sprays or a soapy sponge to kill invading ants until you can find the source of food and clean it up.
• Vinegar on a wet sponge can be used to wipe up a trail of ants. The vinegar will clean away the trail, making it harder for the ants to find their way back to you.
• Cayenne (red) pepper sprinkled in the area you see ants can repel them. Be careful that pets and humans do not touch it, it can burn their eyes and throat!
• Store food and wet garbage in sealed containers.
• Use a barrier around pet food if you must leave it out on the floor. Place the bowl of pet food in a larger, shallow pan filled with water and detergent.
• Choose the least toxic pesticides, such as insecticidal soap, or dusts like diatomaceous earth (found in health food stores) or boric acid (closely related to Borax) before turning to more toxic sprays or baits.
• Bait stations (disks) like COMBAT, which contain hydramethylnon, are available in the supermarket and are quite effective in ant control. Be sure to keep them away from children. They work well when used along with “cleaning up and caulking up”.

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Roaches

Cockroaches make appearances in nearly everyone's life at some point. The species has been around since the Carboniferous Period, some 350 million years ago. Four species are found in America: the German, Oriental, Brownbanded, and American cockroach. Cockroaches can slip into your home in the crevices of corrugated cardboard boxes or hitch a ride in grocery bags. They can multiply very quickly. As cockroaches decompose, they release allergens, small particles that make some people sick. Researchers have found that exposure to cockroach “dust” and frass (feces) can trigger asthma attacks. All the more reason to take action immediately if you see a roach, or roach frass which looks like coffee grounds.

Tips to Discourage Roaches:

• Reduce sources of food and water. Even cough drops by the bed are potential roach food.
• Reduce clutter! It makes cleaning harder, leaving them more food. Clutter also gives roaches plenty of hiding places.
• Remove dead leaves and rubbish heaps (even compost piles).
• Store food in containers (plastic, metal, glass) that close tightly and that roaches can not chew through.
• Place waste from the cleanup or preparation of meals in plastic containers with snap-on lids, and snap the lid on firmly after each use.
• Wash out bottles, cans, wrappings and other items that have food residues with soapy water before disposing or storing for recycling.
• Place aluminum screening over vents and windows. Caulk around the edge of the screen to make a tight barrier.
• Fix dripping faucets and any other leaks. Provide drainage or ventilation to dry out moist areas. Don’t leave water on kitchen surfaces, and remove pet water bowls at night or place them in a pan of soapy water as a barrier to roaches.
• Submerge dishes in a strong solution of detergent and water when you don’t have time to wash them.
• Caulk, paint or seal potential roach hiding places.
• Submerge dishes in a strong solution of detergent and water when you don’t have time to wash them.
• If you use roach baits, remember that they are pesticides and should be used selectively and with caution. Read and follow label instructions carefully. Place baits out of the reach of small children and pets. Store any unused baits in a locked cabinet.
• Boric acid is a poison that should be applied sparingly and with caution. A roach will walk right around a heap of boric acid, so apply a fine layer that roaches will have a hard time avoiding. It can irritate lungs if inhaled, and if eaten could be fatal.

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