

# TEN STEPS TO PEST CONTROL

A Factsheet From Midwest Pesticide Action Center

**Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the best way to control pests using a combination of common sense actions for better and safer pest control. 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.**

## Look Around and Play Detective

Have a close look around your home. Figure out where the pests are coming in, where they might be hiding (for example, cracks and small spaces), and where they find food and water in your home. First check behind the fridge and oven, and under the kitchen sink - three favorite pest areas. This will help you with the steps you take below. Keep an eye out for pests - the sooner you notice pests, the easier they are to get rid of.



## Be Persistent

If you rent, 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.

## Repair

Sealing cracks, crevices, and holes will keep pests out of your home. Before making these repairs, use what you discovered in your home to determine what supplies you will need. Repair areas where pests are the biggest problem first - usually the kitchen and bathroom. 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, but in the long run repairs made with caulk, plaster, or cement are much better. Use steel or copper wool to insert into the holes before sealing them up, to prevent pests from coming through. Weather-strip around outside doors and repair any torn window screens. Put drain screens over sink and tub drains.

## Reduce Clutter

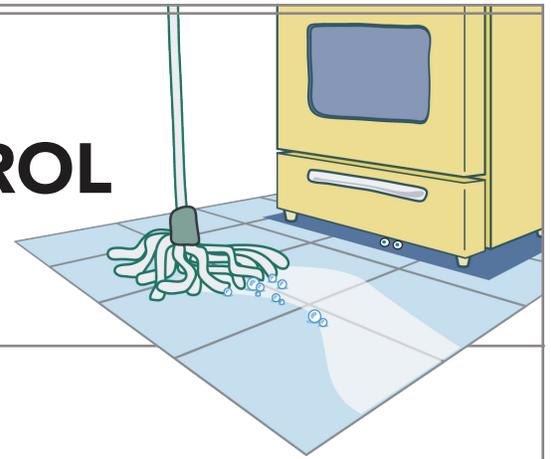
Clutter can be old newspapers, cardboard boxes, old shoes - basically any items that you store and may not need. Clutter gives pests a hiding place, nesting material, and, since it often makes cleaning harder, it usually means that they will have more food. Clutter can also hide evidence of a growing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

## Store Properly

Throw out things you don't need, and organize the belongings you will keep. Store things at least 1" off of the floor and wall, so that you can see and clean around it. As much as possible, get rid of cardboard. Pests love to hide in it.

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(Continued)



## 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 (crumbs) as well as droppings or markings the pest left behind. Clean under the oven, refrigerator, 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 become roach dust, which can trigger asthma. Clean your house when people with asthma aren't present, and won't return for several hours.

## Deny Pests Water

Use buckets to collect water from leaky pipes, 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.

## Deny Pests Food

Keep food in sealed containers to prevent pests from getting to it. Use sturdy containers with a lid. Use a clothespin or chip clip to reseal open bags of breakfast cereal, chips, crackers, cookies, and any other foods. 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.

## Pest Baits

If you took all of the above steps, waited a few weeks and haven't noticed a decrease in the amount of pests, you may want to consider a bait. Baits are pesticides 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 them unless you've taken the steps outlined above and still have a problem. They 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 bait in a locked cabinet or out of reach of children.

## What to Expect From a Pest Control Company

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 serviceman 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. Visit our website at [www.spcpweb.org](http://www.spcpweb.org) for a list of companies that can provide these services, and a list of questions to ask the pest control company over the phone.

Midwest Pesticide Action Center is dedicated to reducing the health risks and environmental impacts of pesticides and promoting safer alternatives.

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