

# GETTING RID OF COCKROACHES IN SIX SIMPLE STEPS

A FACTSHEET FROM MIDWEST PESTICIDE ACTION CENTER

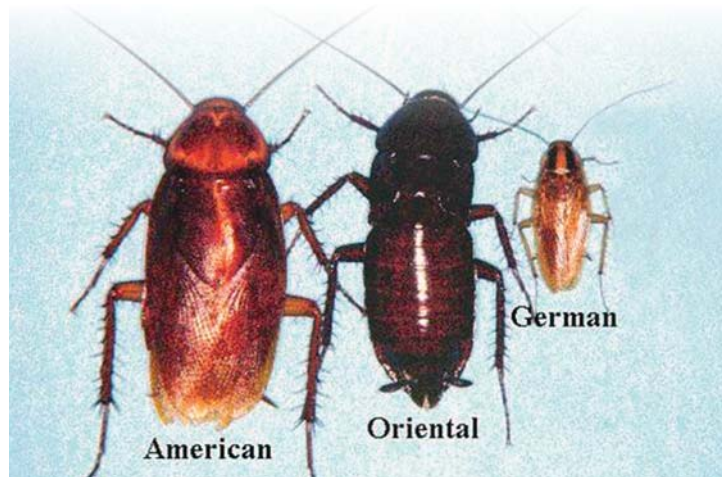


MIDWEST PESTICIDE  
ACTION CENTER

Cockroaches are one of the oldest and most common pests found living in our homes, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, and other indoor spaces. They also are considered one of the most dangerous to human health. Cockroaches contaminate food, transmit disease and bacteria, and cause allergic reactions including asthma attacks. Spray pesticides used to kill cockroaches also cause serious health problems and more importantly, don't work. You can get rid of cockroaches using a safe and effective plan called Integrated Pest Management, or IPM. You will find below the main steps of an IPM plan for cockroaches.

## BEFORE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Cockroaches need food, water, and shelter to survive. Once they find these things, they leave "scent trails" to attract others.
- In Illinois, the three most common cockroaches are the American, German and Oriental (a.k.a. water bug). While treatment is generally the same for all cockroaches, it is necessary to know which type you have in order to be more effective.
- Cockroaches are common in basements, bathrooms, and kitchens. They prefer warm, humid areas and tight spaces (like cracks).
- Cockroaches are strong and tough to get rid of. They reproduce fast and are very good at hiding. Often you don't know there is a problem until it's a big problem!
- Cockroaches usually come out to eat or drink at night; this is when you are most likely to see them.



## STEP 1: INSPECT AND IDENTIFY

You must know which kind of cockroach you are dealing with and where they are located so you can focus your efforts. Walk around your home and note any areas where cockroaches could live (dark, tight, and moist spaces). Focus on the kitchen and bathroom. Look for signs of roach activity like droppings or shed skins. Set out sticky monitoring traps in areas where you think they might be hiding; be sure to place them out of children's reach. Check traps regularly and identify any trapped pests. Share information with your landlord or Pest Management Professional (PMP).

## STEP 2: KEEP THEM OUT (OR IN)

If a cockroach can't get into your home, it can never become a problem. Typically cockroaches enter a building through its doors, cracks, holes, windows, or without us even knowing, on our clothes, backpacks, groceries, cardboard boxes, etc. To prevent cockroaches from entering your home:

- Move dumpsters away from back door and keep lids closed.
- Install doorsweeps (the flap under the door) as needed. Avoid propping doors open.
- Caulk and repair any holes around water pipes, baseboards, outlets, and windows.
- Put screens over windows and drains.
- Use a cleaning solution that is made up of 1-part vinegar to 1-part water to remove any "scent trails."
- Unload any cardboard boxes immediately and remove from home.

# GETTING RID OF COCKROACHES IN SIX SIMPLE STEPS (cont.)

## STEP 3: REMOVE FOOD AND WATER

Once they get inside your house, cockroaches are attracted to areas where food and water are easily accessible. Limiting food and water is enough to stress a population and effect reproduction. Cockroaches eat everything we eat but will also eat a lot of other common household items, like toothpaste, cardboard boxes, or wallpaper glue. Cockroaches can live up to two weeks without food, but they need water or moisture every few days. To get rid of food and water sources:

- ☛ Store food in tightly sealed containers.
- ☛ Use a trash can with a lid, and take garbage out often. Clean trash can regularly.
- ☛ Limit where food is eaten. Sweep, mop, or vacuum food areas daily.
- ☛ Clean up spills immediately.
- ☛ Don't leave dirty dishes in the sink overnight; wash or rinse them right away.
- ☛ Clean inside, under, and around the stove, oven, microwave, and dishwasher.
- ☛ Clean drains, using an enzyme cleaner or stiff wire brush.
- ☛ Fix leaky pipes.
- ☛ Get rid of all cardboard.

## STEP 4: REDUCE SHELTER

There are hundreds of places a cockroach could hide in the average home. Generally, cockroaches live in groups. Do your best to eliminate as many hiding places as possible.

- ☛ Get rid of clutter including newspapers, magazines, and cardboard.
- ☛ Fix peeling wallpaper.
- ☛ Caulk or seal holes, cracks, and crevices especially around pipes and under the sink.
- ☛ Check potted plants. If infested, throw away.
- ☛ If your home is heavily infested, check electronics, books, and behind picture frames.
- ☛ Repair loose floor boards and other molding.

## STEP 5: MONITOR AND RECORD-KEEPING

Keep track of everything you, your landlord, and the pest control company does to manage your problem. Continue monitoring with sticky traps, so that you can evaluate your efforts.

## STEP 6: TREATMENT

Nonchemical and chemical treatment always comes last. Your first line of defense is to prevent access and eliminate food, water, and shelter by following steps 1 through 5. If you don't follow these steps first, cockroaches are likely to return.

### Regularly

- ☛ Vacuum floors, cupboards, cracks, and crevices. Use vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- ☛ Clean "scent trails" with 1-part vinegar and 1- part water.

### Safe Choices That Work!

Gel baits or bait stations work best against cockroaches. They can be purchased at your local hardware store. Be sure to choose a product that is made for cockroaches. If you have any questions or need help, don't be afraid to ask. Always read labels before using any product and follow directions completely. Gel baits and bait stations need to be placed where there are signs of cockroaches or where you have seen them. Products should always be out of a child's reach.

### Things to Avoid

Do not use aerosols, sprays, bombs, or foggers. These are NOT useful and are an outdated way to get rid of these pests. They will not eliminate the problem, and they can affect you or your family's health. If someone has been hired to do a chemical treatment in your home, ask them to use baits instead of sprays.



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