

PA IPM FACT SHEET SERIES

Got Pest Problems?

Eliminate Household Pests with IPM

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Did You Know? . . . Common Pests and Pesticides Can Cause Health Problems

Pests such as weeds, cockroaches, and rodents, as well as the chemicals we use to control them, can trigger allergies and/or asthma by contaminating our air indoors and out. For example:

- Roaches and rodents leave behind droppings and body dust that can trigger asthma.
- Pollen from weeds can cause seasonal allergies and/or trigger asthma.
- Some bug sprays, rodent baits, and weed killers can be dangerous to human and pet health, especially if used improperly.

What Is IPM?

Integrated pest management (IPM) uses information about the pest in order to choose methods of control that are safest and most effective. IPM methods include pest prevention, exclusion, and nonchemical tools first. If chemical pesticides are needed, products are chosen that pose the least risk to human health. With IPM, you start by asking, “Why is this pest here?” and try to remove the conditions allowing the pest to enter and live. This approach solves pest problems rather than just treating the symptoms. It also reduces the need to use pesticides repeatedly.

Eliminate Pests Safely IPM methods are common sense!

Step 1: Pest Identification

Find out what kind of pests you have and where they are coming from. Each pest has different habits and life cycles, so it's important to “know your enemy.” For rodents and insects, sticky traps

can help you determine what species are present and where they are. For rodents, look for signs they are in the house, such as dark-colored droppings, holes in the wall ringed with dirty, oily rubbings, and signs of them gathering food and nesting material. Mice droppings are pointed and the size of a grain of rice, while rat droppings are blunt and the size of small raisins.

Step 2: Prevention

All pests look for food, water, and/or shelter. If you understand what they want, you can take it away. This is the most important step in IPM—prevention.

- Keep living areas clean and uncluttered. Clutter, food crumbs, and access to water are like a five-star resort for pests—tear down their hotel!
- Keep yards and vacant lots maintained by mowing and picking up trash.
- Repair holes and cracks in walls, windows, and screens.
- Seal pest entry points and movement routes. Use caulking, copper mesh, or other pest-proof materials for gaps in walls, around wires and pipes, and in pavement and other surfaces.
- Share information with neighbors. Pests do not stay in one place.

Step 3: Controlling Pests Safely

If you need to use something to help get rid of pests, use traps and baits first, along with less-toxic dusts such as boric acid for insects. Choose and use chemicals carefully.

- Read the label—it has valuable information on proper use, storage, disposal, and what to do in case of poisoning.
- Most important, pick the right method for the situation, in-

The Pennsylvania IPM Program is a collaboration between The Pennsylvania State University and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.



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doors or out. If children are present, be especially careful. Some pest control products pose more risk to children.

Products Considered **More Risky** to Children

Any pest control product that kids might accidentally breathe, eat, drink, or get on their skin, such as:

- Aerosols, foggers, or “bug bombs” that contaminate air and leave residues
- Concentrated liquids that must be mixed
- Liquid sprays, especially in bottles that can be opened by kids
- Colored liquid sprays that look and/or smell like soft drinks or other food products
- Mothballs and “pill” forms of baits that look like candy
- Rat and mouse baits in pellets
- Illegal pesticides without an EPA registration number on the container (e.g., Tres Pasitos, Chinese chalk)—who knows what’s in them?

Products Considered **Less Risky** to Children

Products difficult for children to get into or that are not very toxic, such as:

- Enclosed “child-resistant” traps or baits for roaches, ants, or mice
- Sticky traps for roaches or flies
- Roach and ant products containing boric acid or diatomaceous earth, if used properly
- Products containing insect growth regulators (IGRs) like methoprene, hydroxyflorfen, or pyriproxyfen

Severe Infestation?

If these methods aren’t working, you may need professional help. Find a reputable and licensed pest control company and be sure to ask about their approach to pest management. Do they use IPM? Will they explain to you their procedures and products? A brochure on what questions to ask is available at the Penn State Pesticide Education Program’s website at extension.psu.edu/pesticide-education.

Need More Help?

Identifying Common Household Insects in Pennsylvania: pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/UF021.pdf

Less-Toxic Pest Management: www.centalsan.org/index.cfm?navId=586

New York State IPM Program Fact Sheets: www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/publdg.asp

PA IPM Pest Problem Solver: extension.psu.edu/ipm/resources/pestproblemsolver

Pesticide Education Program at Penn State (Consumer Topics): extension.psu.edu/pesticide-education

If you suspect that a child has been accidentally exposed to chemicals, immediately call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

For More Information

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extension.psu.edu/ipm/resources/urbanphilly

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