



# Preventing Pests at Home

Is your family bugged by pests like ants, spiders, cockroaches, termites, or mice? You're not alone. You can effectively control or kill pests when you take action to starve them out, dry them out, and keep them out. Like humans, pests need three critical elements to survive: food, water, and shelter. By following three simple and effective steps, you can protect your family's health and safety while controlling annoying pests.

## Starve Them Out!

Pests will eat just about anything, but they might leave you alone if they don't have easy access to food:

- Seal up boxes and bags of food. Roaches love cardboard boxes and can climb into these items with ease.
- Store open food in plastic bags or containers, such as cereal, flour, or sugar.
- Immediately clean up spills and leftover crumbs. Pests love free food left out in the open.
- Don't walk around the house while eating. Meals and snacks should be eaten at a table.
- Clean dirty dishes right away. Pests want whatever is left of your meals.
- Keep a tight lid on trash, and empty it often. It may be trash to you, but pests see it as dinner. Place trash cans far away from a back door entrance.
- Don't leave pet food out overnight. Food can stir up pests' appetites.

## Dry Them Out!

Although roaches can live up to one month without food, without water roaches can die in a week's time:

- Always drain dish water from a sink. Because roaches can swim, a sink full of water might become the site of a roach pool party.

- Wipe water and other spilled liquids off the counter as soon as you first see it. Puddles are roach magnets.
- Fix or report leaky faucets, radiators, dishwashers, and washing machines to a building manager.
- Empty excess water in flower pots and plant stands. A drop of water can be all a roach needs to feel satisfied.

## Keep Them Out!

By keeping roaches and rodents out of your home, you can prevent them from ever becoming a problem. Rodents spend most of their lives hiding. They love cracks, and can squeeze just about anywhere. Think smart, and they can't move in on you:

- Seal cracks and openings along baseboards, behind sinks, and around pipes and windows.
- Repair holes in door and window screens to prevent insects and other pests from entering a home.
- Check boxes and bags for roaches before bringing them into a home.
- Clean up clutter, including stacks of newspapers, paper bags, and cardboard boxes. These make good hiding places for pests.
- Set traps to control rats and mice. If you use baits, make sure they are in a tamper-resistant bait station made of durable plastic or metal, and place in an area where children and pets cannot touch them.

For more information on pesticides or pesticide poisoning prevention, refer to EPA's Pesticides Program Web site at [www.epa.gov/pesticides](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides), or call the National Pesticide Information Center at 1-800-858-7378.



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