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Pesticides: Controlling Pests

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Do's and Don'ts of Pest Control

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Do ask questions and find the answers.

How can you safely solve your pest problems? The key is to be willing to ask questions. Learning about the pests you have and options that are available to control specific pests is the first step.

Try pest prevention first.

- Remove sources of food, water and shelter.
- Store food in sealed plastic or glass containers. Garbage containing food scraps should be placed in tightly covered trash cans. Remove garbage regularly from your home.
- Fix leaky plumbing and don't let water accumulate anywhere in the home. Don't let water collect in trays under your house plants or refrigerator. Don't leave pet food and water out overnight.
- Clutter provides places for pests to breed and hide and makes it hard to get rid of them. Get rid of things like stacks of newspapers, magazines, or cardboard.
- Close off places where pests can enter and hide. For example, caulk cracks and crevices around cabinets or baseboards. Use steel wool to fill spaces around pipes. Cover any holes with wire mesh.
- Learn about the pests you have and options to control them.
- Check for pests in packages or boxes before carrying them into your home.

Do safely and correctly use pesticides.

Keep pets and children away from areas where pesticides have been applied.

After preventative steps have been taken, you can use baits as a first line of chemical defense against insects or rodents. These are often effective and can be used with low risk of exposure to the pesticide, as long as they are kept out of the reach of children and pets.

Other relatively low-risk pesticides are available for some pests. Consult your local cooperative extension service office for recommendations suitable for your area. The [U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site](#) can help you identify your local extension service office.

Pesticides not contained in baits or traps should generally only be applied to targeted locations, not sprayed over the whole room. Use fogging devices only when absolutely necessary.

Always read and follow the pesticide label's instructions and safety warnings.

Use ready-to-use products (i.e., no mixing needed) whenever possible.

If you hire any outside persons to help control pests, ask them to find and correct the source of the problem before applying pesticides. For example, you might have to repair a leaky toilet to remove a water source. Ask them to use baits and crack and crevice treatments when feasible.

Only apply chemicals approved for use in homes; the label will list where the chemical may be used; write down the name and EPA registration number of any chemical used by someone you hire. You will need this information if you decide to look up more information on the pesticide. The pest control operator should be able to provide information about the chemical, such as the material safety data sheet.

Do dispose of leftover pesticides and pesticide containers properly.

Read the label to find out how to dispose of the pesticide and the container.

Many communities have household hazardous waste collections that will accept unwanted pesticides. Call your waste disposal authority for information about your community.

Don't use outdoor chemicals indoors.

Many chemicals intended for use outdoors are dangerous to use indoors because they will remain toxic longer inside than they would outdoors.

Don't assume that twice as much is better.

Always read and follow label directions.

Using too much of a pesticide can endanger your family's health.

Don't transfer pesticides to other containers.

Store pesticides in their original containers.

Only mix as much as you are going to use at one time if the pesticide must be mixed with water.

Children and others have been poisoned by accidentally consuming pesticides stored in food or beverage containers. Don't use empty pesticide containers to store anything else.

No matter how well you wash the container, it could still contain remnants of the pesticide and could harm someone.