



# A healthy home is free of pests

A pest-free home prevents diseases and reduces asthma triggers.

## The main idea

A pest is any animal that is somewhere it is not wanted. Many people react to the first signs of a pest problem by applying strong pesticides. But using pesticides may cause problems that are worse than the harm caused by the pests themselves. Pests should be controlled safely.

## How it affects your health

Pests (such as rats, mice, cockroaches, mosquitoes, ticks, and bedbugs)

- May trigger asthma attacks in some people
- Some pests—such as deer ticks, fleas, cockroaches, and rats—carry diseases
- Although bedbugs do not carry diseases, their bites may itch and irritate the skin

Pesticides (chemicals designed to kill pests)

- May trigger asthma attacks, other breathing problems, nausea, and headaches in some people
- May have long-term effects, such as birth defects, learning disabilities, and cancer

## How to know if you have a problem

- Seeing or hearing the pest itself—dead or alive—often in damp areas (like bathrooms and basements), wherever food is stored, and at night
- Droppings, hair, or nests
- Damage from gnawing on walls, wires, food, food packages, or newspapers
- Tracks (areas where pests frequently run, usually along walls, where there is no dust or dirt)
- Rows of red bite marks on the skin from bedbugs

## How to fix the problem

Use integrated pest management (IPM) methods to control pests safely

- Remove food, water, and places where pests can live
  - Repair moisture problems, such as leaks
  - Store food in strong, covered containers, and keep dining and kitchen areas clean and dry
  - Take out trash every day
  - Clear away clutter where pests can live
  - Vacuum well and often
  - Seal cracks and openings in floors or walls, using copper mesh, brass wool, or silicone caulk
- Use the least harmful solution to solve pest problems, such as sticky traps or boric acid
- Use pesticides only when other methods fail: follow directions very carefully and store pesticides where children cannot reach them

## How to learn more

- Stop Pests in Housing, [www.stoppests.org](http://www.stoppests.org)
- National Center for Healthy Housing, [www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm](http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm)
- New Hampshire Bed Bug Action Committee, [www.nhbedbugs.com/bed-bug-resources.php](http://www.nhbedbugs.com/bed-bug-resources.php)

For more information, call the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Healthy Homes Initiative at 860-509-7299, see [www.ct.gov/dph/healthyhomes](http://www.ct.gov/dph/healthyhomes), or call Infoline at 2-1-1

