

KNOW THE FACTS!

Cockroaches

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, there are around 55 species of cockroaches in the United States. However, there are only a few species that inhabit homes and create a public health nuisance. When we receive nuisance complaints of roach infestations, the German cockroach is usually the culprit.



What are cockroaches (Blattodea)?

Cockroaches are insects of the order Blattodea. Cockroaches have flattened, broad bodies with long antennae and long hind legs. Each of their six legs has tiny sensory hairs. Adult roaches have wings that fold flat on their backs, but not every cockroach can fly. Most roaches are brown or black and can range anywhere from 0.07 inches to 3 inches in length, depending on the species.

One of the most distinctive features of a cockroach is the shield-shaped pronotum located directly behind the head. If you're observing a roach in your home, chances are it's either a German cockroach or a brown-banded cockroach. These are the two most common unwelcome inhabitants of homes, buildings and structures.

Who is at risk of getting cockroaches?

Any home with food and moisture can become infested with cockroaches. While sanitation plays a large role in abating a cockroach infestation—it's not just dirty homes that may become infested. The two most common cockroaches, the German and brown banded roach are hitchhikers and can come into the home through grocery bags, animal food, luggage, and cardboard boxes or furniture. Cockroaches in your house may have already been there when you moved in. They may come from your neighbor's property, or they may enter your house from their outside habitat.

Why are cockroaches a public health nuisance?

Historically, cockroaches have been despised for their appearance, odor and ability to quickly take over your home with high reproduction rates. Recent research shows that cockroaches can spread bacteria including E. Coli and Salmonella and the proteins in their exoskeleton, egg debris, and frass (fecal material) can trigger allergic reactions in people. Cockroaches do not bite but the spines on their legs may scratch an individual's skin. Cockroaches usually go unnoticed until an infestation has already occurred.



**HAMILTON COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

250 William Howard Taft Road, 2nd Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45219
Phone 513.946.7800 Fax 513.946.7890
hamiltoncountyhealth.org

Updated: 10/17/2017

KNOW THE FACTS!

Cockroaches(cont.)

How should I check for cockroaches?

Cockroaches are primarily nocturnal. Daytime sightings may indicate potentially heavy infestations. They tend to hide in cracks and crevices and can move freely from room to room or adjoining housing units via wall spaces, plumbing, and other utility installations. Kitchens and bathrooms typically have the highest number of cockroaches due to the presence of food products and moisture from plumbing fixtures. Cockroaches are not sanitary creatures and they will shed egg casings, exoskeletal debris and frass wherever they go; check under the kitchen sink, inside cabinets in the kitchen and bathrooms, and behind/under appliances. Even if you are not noticing these signs, a glue trap is a great device to have in any home in target areas to monitor activity of any pests. If you trap a cockroach on a glue board you may want to actively look for the signs of an infestation or call a professional.

Apartment buildings often have the worst infestations. The goal is to keep cockroaches out of the home and to eliminate existing pests. Reaching this goal is not always easy, especially in multi-unit housing that is already infested. For most apartment buildings, the landlord must take a building-wide approach to controlling these pests. Moreover, a coordinated effort by the landlord and all tenants is required to eliminate cockroaches. But if you have a neighbor that is creating a nuisance, you are not helpless—by keeping your unit/home clean and dry, the roaches may only visit but they will not stay. Cockroaches will stay around the consistent food source-- your dirty neighbor.

How can I control cockroaches?

Four management strategies exist for controlling cockroaches. The first is **prevention**. This strategy includes inspecting items being carried into the home and sealing cracks and crevices in kitchens, bathrooms, exterior doors, and windows. Structural modifications would include weather stripping and pipe collars.

The second strategy is **sanitation**. This denies cockroaches food, water, and shelter. These efforts include quickly cleaning food particles from shelving and floors; timely washing of dinnerware; and routine cleaning under refrigerators, stoves, furniture, and similar areas. If pets are fed indoors, pet food should be stored in tight containers and not left in bowls overnight. Litter boxes should be cleaned routinely. Access should be denied to water sources by fixing leaking plumbing, drains, sink traps, and aquaria. Elimination of shelter can be partially accomplished by purging clutter, such as papers and soiled clothing and rags. The third strategy is **trapping**. Commercially available cockroach traps can be used to capture roaches and serve as a monitoring device. The most effective trap placement is against vertical surfaces, primarily corners, and under sinks, in cabinets, basements, and floor drains. The fourth strategy is **chemical control**. The use of chemicals typically indicates that the other three strategies have been applied incorrectly; chemical control should be a last resort. Numerous insecticides are available and appropriate information is obtainable from the Environmental Protection Agency. Always be sure to read the label of any chemicals you apply to ensure your and your family's safety. These chemicals are toxic and you want to ensure that you apply them correctly. You should consult with a licensed exterminator if possible.

If you rent a home or apartment within Hamilton County (excluding cities of Cincinnati, Norwood or Springdale) and you think you have cockroaches, please contact the Hamilton County Public Health at (513) 946-7847. Sanitarians will work with your landlord to eliminate the problem.



**HAMILTON COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

250 William Howard Taft Road, 2nd Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45219
Phone 513.946.7800 Fax 513.946.7890
hamiltoncountyhealth.org