



Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education

Planning. Guidance. Protection.



PESTS

What is a pest?

Any living organism that causes damage, economic loss, or transmits disease may be called a pest. Pests can be animals like insects or mice, unwanted plants like weeds, or microorganisms like bacteria. Some examples of pests are termites causing damage to our buildings, dandelions in the lawn, or fleas and ticks on our dogs and cats. Other common examples of pests are cockroaches, ants, spiders, bed bugs and mosquitoes. It is important to keep your child care areas pest free as some pests transmit disease and others can cause illness.

How can I keep pests out of my child care facility?

For starters, keep your building clean. This means not leaving food out, cleaning dishes and pans often, and not leaving pet food out. Clean floors and countertops often. Also, seal any holes that may allow pests get inside. Dry warm places with a supply of food and water are attractive to pests.

What about pesticides?

Pesticides are poisons that can help control pests. Pesticides can be helpful if used correctly. They can also be harmful to your health if used incorrectly. Remember to keep children away from pesticides. It is important to use only pesticides approved for indoor use inside your building and to read the label to know how much to use. Using more pesticide than what is recommended will not do a better job and can have a harmful result.

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is a systems approach to managing insect, mite, disease and weed pests. IPM uses a combination of the most compatible and ecologically sound pest suppression tactics to keep pest populations below levels that cause problems. IPM uses cultural, biological and chemical methods. The goal of IPM is to prevent the problems caused by unacceptable numbers of pests, rather than eliminating all pests. For more information on IPM go to the National Center for Healthy Housing or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or visit the University of Tennessee, Child-Serving Facility IPM webpage. schoolipm.utk.edu/



What about mice and rats?

Rodents, such as mice and rats, are common outdoors. To rodents, your building is a warm place with plenty of food and water. Rodents can enter your building through very small holes. Make sure any wire, pipe, window, crawlspace door, etc. that goes through an external wall has a good tight seal to keep rodents outside. Filling holes with caulk, foam or other products will help. Filling large holes with steel wool or wire mesh will help deter rodents from finding their way inside. Be careful using rodent poisons near children or pets. Rodent traps are a better choice.

What about cockroaches?

Cockroaches are disgusting to most people. Cockroaches are survivors and are just about everywhere. It is important to keep bugs like cockroaches out of your building. Cockroach droppings are a known allergen. Cockroach droppings can trigger an asthma attack. Cockroaches need only a tiny bit of food or water to live. Cockroach baits are a safe way to control cockroaches and are more effective than pesticide sprays.

What about mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes are small flying insects that feed on blood. Mosquito bites often swell and itch, though most go away after a few days. Some mosquitoes are known to transmit disease. In Tennessee, a few people each year get sick from diseases such as West Nile virus, Zika and Lacrosse Encephalitis. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water. Having standing water around your building can lead to more mosquitoes. To fight the bite, do not let water stand in open containers such as planters, bird baths, pools, ponds or tires.

What about ants?

Ants are common pests. When ants get in your house, it is important to go after the queen ant, not just the ants you can see. Although pesticide sprays can kill ants, it is often better to use ant baits. Ant baits aim to destroy the entire ant colony, not just the ants you can see. Red fire ants are imported pests. Fire ants like to build mounds in disturbed soil. Fire ants bite and sting. Imported red fire ants can be difficult to control. Consult with your local Agricultural Extension office for more information about fire ants for more information

What about spiders?

Spiders are very common. They eat a variety of insects such as crickets, flies and moths. In Tennessee, two spiders may cause serious medical problems if they bite – the Black Widow and the Brown Recluse. If someone is bitten by one of these spiders, seek medical treatment. Filling cracks and holes with caulk will deter spiders from entering the living space of your building.

Black Widow



Brown Recluse



What about bed bugs?

Bed bugs are not as common as other pests. The adult bed bug is about a ¼ inch long and reddish brown. Young nymph bed bugs are smaller and light-colored. Bed bugs are flat, allowing them fit in small cracks and crevices. Bed bugs usually bite at night.

Bed bugs are often accidentally transported in luggage, clothing, beds, furniture and other items. Be cautious with used or rented beds, bedding, furniture and other items that may harbor bed bugs. Inspect them before bringing them into your building. It can be helpful to use mattress cases on your bed. Avoid having clutter under or around your bed. If you have unexpected bug bites, inspect your bed and bedding looking for the signs of the small brown bugs. If you have severe bites or an allergic reaction, contact your doctor. To read more about bed bugs click on the EPA's Bed Bug



information webpage. If you have general questions about bed bugs contact your local UT Agricultural Extension office. If you believe that you have bed bugs in your building, consider hiring a professional exterminator who has successfully treated for bed bug problems. To learn more about bed bugs read CDC's Health Advisory - Health Concerns about Misuse of Pesticides for Bed Bug Control or click on the EPA's Bed Bug Information webpage.

What about head lice?

Head lice are small insects about the size of sesame seed. These insects attach to the skin on the head and lay eggs in hair. Together the lice and their eggs, called nits, can be a resistive nuisance. Head lice are not caused by poor hygiene. Rather, head lice spread from head-to-head contact or sharing clothing with a person who already has head lice. Head lice affects only humans, these pests do not come from pets or animals.



The U.S. Food & Drug Administration's website has helpful tips for how to control and treat head lice. Treatments are available both over-the-counter and by prescription. Normal treatments are hair shampoos or skin lotions. A special "nit comb" can be used to remove dead lice and eggs. Head lice seem to be more common with children and can spread at school, sporting activities, and camps. When controlling head lice, children should avoid sharing hats, towels, combs, brushes or headphones. Clothing and bed linens should be washed using hot water and dried using high heat to help control lice.

For more information on pesticides:

<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/environmental/environmental-health-topics/eht/pesticides.html>