



Rodents

Keeping Your Home Free and Clear



While rodents like rats and mice can be a problem year-round, in the summer, you might see increased activity as the weather gets warm and food becomes plentiful. Below, you'll find some tips about keeping your home clear of pests, advice on what to do if they're already present, and what to do afterwards to make sure they don't come back!

Prevention

- Rodents can get in through very small holes, with rats being able to fit through holes the size of a half-dollar, and mice through holes the size of a nickel. If you find holes, you can fix them with steel wool held in place with caulk
 - Look for holes inside your home inside or under fridges and stoves, around pipe fixtures, around floor and dryer vents, inside attic and basement crawl spaces, and between walls and wall junctures
 - Holes on the outside of your home might be found near windows and doors, around holes for electrical, gas, and piping, and inside the foundation



- Make sure to trim back any vegetation in your yard to keep a gap between your home and the vegetation: at least 10 inches (25.4 cm) or more



- Clean up food spills inside the home and do not leave uneaten food or dirty dishes out for long periods. Do not leave pet food and water bowls out overnight, and make sure to keep areas around outdoor cooking spaces (such as grills) clean of fallen debris
 - When storing food (indoors or out), keep them in tight-fitting hard plastic, glass, or stainless-steel containers. Trash-bins and dumpsters should be rodent proof and tightly closed. Make sure to wash trash bins frequently with soap and water to reduce odors
- Pick up after your pets! Animal waste can attract rodents
- Keep the grass and shrubbery near your home well-tended and keep things like wood piles away from the house. Get rid of old tires, trucks, or cars
- If you have compost, keep it far from the house and in a tight-fitting, rodent-proof container (stainless-steel is best). If you have animals such as chickens or goats, make sure to store animal feed in similar containers when not immediately in use
- Keep bird feeders away from the house, and if you do have birdfeeders, use a squirrel baffle to minimize the chances of squirrels and other rodents accessing the birdseed as a food source

Trapping

- There are inexpensive snap-traps you can purchase at local hardware stores. Make sure to carefully read the instructions before setting the traps, and remember that traps for mice and rats are different
- When using snap traps, position them in a “T” shape with the bait beside the wall
 - Mice and rats don’t like being out in the open and tend to run closer to the walls
 - In areas with less foot traffic, place traps in areas with heavy rodent activity
- Use a pea-sized bit of peanut butter as the bait
- Rats can be cautious, so it might take more time for them to approach traps
- Remember to seal rodent entry holes, as traps by themselves will not stop rodents from returning!
- If you are having difficulty or believe you have a large infestation, do not hesitate to contact a licensed pest control professional
 - Rats can be street-wide problems, as they can range quite far from their burrows. Consider talking and coordinating with your neighbors to make sure everyone is on the same page and making an effort to reduce pest attractors



Clean-Up

- Make sure that at least a week has passed with no activity during active trapping. After no captures occur for a full week, it should be safe to begin cleaning
- Remember to wear gloves (rubber or vinyl) before beginning cleanup
- Eye protection (like goggles) and a properly fit mask are also recommended
- DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM THE AREA: rodent droppings may contain harmful viruses that you should avoid breathing in
- First, before cleaning an area, ventilate the area thoroughly by opening doors and windows for 30 minutes. Leave the area during this time
- Prepare a disinfectant or bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water is recommended). For commercial disinfectants, follow the instructions on the bottle
- Spray urine and droppings with disinfectant and allow them to sit for 5 minutes. Pick up with a paper towel and discard in the trash
- Next, disinfect items that have been contaminated by rodent droppings

- Hard surfaces can be cleaned with disinfectant and wiped down
- Leave out books and papers in a rodent free area indoors for 1 week, or outdoors under direct sunlight for several hours, then wipe gently with cloth moistened with disinfectant
- Stand upwind while cleaning items to avoid being exposed to dust
- Throw out cardboard contaminated by droppings or urine
- Steam clean or shampoo carpeting
- Dispose of dead rodents or nesting by spraying the area around the rodent with disinfectant for five minutes
 - Place the dead rodent/nesting material in a plastic bag and seal it. Then, place this in a second plastic bag, seal that, and throw into a frequently emptied trash bag
- Contaminated exposed insulation should be placed in a plastic bag and discarded



Helpful Links

- CDC's guidance on [sealing rodent holes](https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/rodent-control/sealing-rodent-holes.html)
- CDC's guidance on [cleaning up rodent attractors](https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/rodent-control/cleaning-up-rodent-attractors.html)
- CDC's guidance on [traps](https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/rodent-control/traps.html)
- CDC's guidance on [cleaning up after rodents](https://www.cdc.gov/rodents/rodent-control/cleaning-up-after-rodents.html)

*Image source for pest disinfection: <https://www.pestec.com/cleaning-up-after-rodents>

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