

Least-toxic Control of Centipedes

Centipedes are elongated, flattened, worm-like creatures with 15 or more pairs of legs, which move very quickly. Close examination reveals one pair of legs per body segment, unlike millipedes that have two or more pairs per body segment. The most common centipede in eastern U.S. and Canada sometimes enters homes and feeds on flies, spiders and other household pests. They can bite when handled carelessly, but are harmless to humans.

A larger centipede with shorter legs is more common in southern U.S. These do not normally enter houses, and are usually found beneath logs or stones. Their bites are more painful but never fatal to humans.

Since centipedes are predacious, they provide a natural insect control. They are beneficial in the garden and yard.

Prevention

- Tightly seal all food and garbage.
- Keep surfaces clean and free of food.
- Vacuum frequently.
- Fix all holes in screens and cracks in the foundation or basement walls.
- Reduce moisture within the home, repair all leaks and provide adequate ventilation to damp areas.

Control

- Insecticides will not prevent future centipede infestations and pose a health risk inside the home. If a centipede is found in the home, instead of using toxins, simply **capture it in a jar and release outside**.
- Control centipedes by **decreasing their food supply**. This means decreasing other indoor insects such as flies.
- To prevent future infestations, **close up any openings in the home** through which centipedes might enter.

References

Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP. "Least Toxic Control of Pests In the Home & Garden: A series of pest control & chemical factsheets." Washington, DC.

Olkowski, Helga, Daar, Shiela, and Olkowski, William, *Common-Sense Pest Control*, Newtown: The Taunton Press, Inc., 1991.

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