Integrated Pest Management in the Home
Michigan State University
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Community IPM Education Series #4 IPM in the Home
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What is IPM?
IPM stands for Integrated Pest Management. In IPM, we learn about our pests and select the best control methods to manage pests with the least effect to people, pets and the environment.

By anticipating and preventing pest activity and combining several pest control methods, you can achieve long-term results.

To do this, you need to:
- Identify the pests.
- Take away their water.
- Take away their food.
- Take away their hiding places.
- Eliminate the existing population.
- Deny entry into your home.

A peaceful and calm attitude also helps. Most pests are not life threatening, and a calm attitude helps you resolve the problem in a safer way. Panic about pests can often lead to overuse or misuse of pesticides.

IPM does NOT mean do nothing!
Using IPM correctly will require a lot of attention on your part to be successful.

A few words about pesticides:
The results from using chemical pesticides are generally temporary, and repeated treatments are often required. Over time, some pests become pesticide-resistant, and are no longer harmed by the pesticide. If used incorrectly, home-use pesticide products can be poisonous to humans. These are some reasons why it is important to practice IPM.

Steps in reducing pesticide risks
- Choose the product that will control the specific pest with the lowest toxicity.
- Read and follow the product label. The label is the law. Using a pesticide in a way that is different from the label is illegal and unsafe. (For help on how to read a label see "What does a pesticide label say?" E-2725)
- Determine the right amount to purchase and use.
- Use the product safely and correctly. NEVER use a pesticide meant for outside indoors.
- Wear proper protective equipment. Required personal protective equipment (PPE) can be found on the label. This can include certain types of gloves, boots, long-sleeved clothing, special coveralls, respirators or eye protection.
- Store and dispose of pesticides properly.

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Steps for Successful Integrated Pest Management

Inspect and Investigate
To get rid of pests you always start with an inspection of the house.

Look for:
• pests
• signs of pests and damage caused by pests (eg. droppings, cast skins)
• conditions good for pests

You are just like a detective. Ask everyone in the house what they have seen.

Discover:
• What pests do you have?
• Where are they coming from?
• What are they eating?

Make this a family activity.

Learn About Your Enemy
Identify what pest or pests you have. Learning the biology of the pest tells you how fast it reproduces, where it likes to live, what it likes to eat, and special things it can do. You will use this information to choose the best ways to manage the pest.

Choose Control Methods
Your goal is to control the pests without harming people. You choose the best methods to do this. Effective pest management emphasizes prevention.

Eliminate food, water and hiding places
• Sanitation/Cleaning
  Frequent cleaning will eliminate food and some of the hiding places for pests. Remember, a crumb to you can be a feast for pests.
• Fixing things
  Fixing leaks takes away water which all pests need. Many pests like to live in damp places.
• Eliminating clutter
  Clutter inside and clutter or weeds and plants right next to the building can provide hiding places and places for the pests to store or find food.

Eliminate the existing population
• Trapping
  Trapping can be used for monitoring and for control. Using sticky traps, glue boards, snap traps and live traps can tell you exactly what kind of pests you have. You can also eliminate some or all of the pests this way.
  • Biological Control
    Using natural enemies of the pest is one choice for control. Examples of this are cats (who eat the mice) or tiny wasps that lay their eggs inside the eggs of cockroaches.
  • Pesticides
    These are chemicals that kill pests. In IPM, we may use pesticides when the other control methods are not effective or practical. If we use pesticides, we choose and use them as they are intended. This means reading and heeding all instructions on the pesticide label.

Deny entry into the home
• Sealing them out
  Caulking, filling holes and fixing broken doors or windows helps keep the pests from returning.

Evaluate
Keep checking to see if the pests are still there and which control methods are working. Change your methods if necessary. Remember, it is much easier to get rid of a small number of pests than a huge number.

Educate Others
Teach others what they can do to keep pests away. Even young children can do their part to take food, water and hiding places away from pests.