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Your Home

Managing Pests in Your Home

Pests seem to be everywhere: on sidewalks, lawns and porches. But have they gone so far as to enter your home? Pests enter the home to seek food, water and shelter. Older homes tend to have more cracks, whether they are loose seals around windows and doors or fractures along foundation lines. Even newer homes are not air tight and provide pests a way in. Living alone or with only a few others means more work for you in keeping the house clean and clutter free.

Though many pests do not directly damage your health, some certainly do, and others act as nuisances that if not controlled early can quickly multiply to cause damage to your lawn, home and self.

Certain species carry infectious diseases and many trigger severe allergies and asthma. Managing and preventing pest problems can be a daunting task, but these critters must be dealt with. This is why Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a wonderful tool to aid in safeguarding your home.

IPM seeks to minimize expenses and environmental damage: it considers your safety, your pocketbook and your home’s health. There is no “one-size-fits-all” policy that will forever eliminate pests from your home; IPM offers a systematic approach to preventing, identifying and controlling pests.

Integrated Pest Management Tips:

- PREVENT: Pests will have less incentive to enter your home if you eliminate food, water and shelter sources. Prevention will save you time and money in the future.
• Eliminate food sources. This means sealing all open foods in air-tight containers, vacuuming, and sweeping up crumbs, cleaning food residues from counters and tables, and refrigerating as much food as possible.

• Eliminate water sources. Reduce humidity throughout the home, especially in basements and bathrooms; dehumidifiers are a great tool. Install metal screens on drains. Quickly fix any leaks or faucet drips to prevent standing water.

• Eliminate shelter sources. Reduce clutter. Seal cracks on screens, windows, doors and foundations with caulk or mesh. Remove trash regularly and keep it in cans with tight-sealing lids. Prune plant life back from touching your home’s edges.

• IDENTIFY: General prevention techniques go a long way, but when a pest arrives, more specific approaches are needed. Before you can know how to tackle a pest problem, you must know which pest you are dealing with. Pest-specific techniques and pesticides are best to reduce unnecessary chemicals and effort. Different species call for different methods.

• CONTROL: Bait stations and traps will help discover where pests enter the home. Cleaning, sanitizing, caulking and sealing will do much in controlling areas of entry.

• If pesticides are necessary, only use ones that target the specific pest.

For descriptions of common pests and control measures, check out Penn State’s publication: [http://extension.psu.edu/ipm/resources/factsheets/common-urban-pests/view](http://extension.psu.edu/ipm/resources/factsheets/common-urban-pests/view)

Your Relationships

Pets and Caregiving

The bond between humans and animals is a remarkable thing. Recent natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf and Hurricane Sandy in the Northeast have shown just how important pets are to their human caregivers. Katrina left about a quarter-million pets stranded. Many adults who were stranded in their flooded homes refused to be rescued unless their pets could come along. For many seniors, in particular, pets are cherished nearly as much (and perhaps sometimes more) as human members of the family.

Research has shown that the caregiving relationship between pets and their owners goes both ways.
Owners provide the basics of food, shelter and an occasional scratch behind the ears, but the love and understanding shown by many pets – dogs in particular – almost defies a scientific explanation.

A 1999 study of seniors living independently showed that, compared to seniors without pets, pet-owning seniors tended to have better physical and mental health, were more active, and handled stress better. Perhaps seniors with these characteristics were just more likely to own pets, but it is an interesting relationship. Simply petting animals can lead to decreased heart rate, blood pressure and temperature.

The companionship of a loving pet offers even more benefits for seniors who have limited contact with others. Daily interaction with pets can counter depression, and the day-to-day tasks of pet ownership (feeding, walking, grooming) can provide purpose in life and a reason to get up each morning. These routines also help provide structure to a senior’s daily schedule, which means regular meals and rest times.

Seniors in assisted living and skilled care environments can also benefit from pet caregiving. Many of these facilities encourage ownership of certain kinds of pets. Others have “house pets,” meaning a dog or cat that roams the facility and visits all the residents.

In addition, several organizations bring trained animals into senior care facilities to visit. This kind of “pet therapy” has many of the same benefits for seniors as caring for pets at home. Some nursing homes have adopted an approach called the “Eden Alternative,” which emphasizes senior interaction with pets, plants and children.

An interesting recent development in animal therapy is PARO, an advanced interactive robot developed specifically for use in facilities where live animals could present problems. PARO is a furry white creature about the size of a small dog, but totally robotic. It can sense touch, sound, light, temperature and posture. It responds as if it were alive, moving its head and legs and making purring sounds. Research on PARO indicates that it provides many of the same benefits as interaction with live pets, particularly for seniors with dementia.

Of course, pet ownership brings with it responsibilities as well as benefits. As seniors age, they may lose their ability to provide pet care and face the decision of finding another caregiver for the pet. Seniors experience significant sadness and loss when pets die. These are important considerations as seniors decide whether and how to add a pet to the family.

Weigh these responsibilities carefully against the remarkable benefits of pets as members of the caregiving team.
Your Health

Calorie Density

You can use the nutrition label to figure out the caloric density of food. Why should you do this? If you eat more foods with lower caloric densities, you may feel more satisfied with less food. This is important if you want to control your weight.

How do you figure out caloric density? First, look at the Nutrition Facts Label on a food package. Find the serving size in grams near the top of the label. On this sample label, the serving is 28 g, which means 28 grams. Then look for the number of calories in that one serving. For this food it is 170 calories. If the food is high in caloric density, the calories will be more than the weight of the food in grams. On this sample food label, the calories are six times higher than the food weighs in grams so it is a very calorie dense food.

But what if the food weighed 222 grams and only had 100 calories? Then the serving of food weighs more than the calories listed so it is low in caloric density.

Foods that contain more water and/or fiber tend to be lower in caloric density. Good examples are vegetables, fruits and non-fat dairy foods.

Should all of your food be low in caloric density? No, that would be impossible, but at least two-thirds of your food choices should be. If you use MyPlate to guide your meal planning, you will likely choose more foods lower in caloric density. This means filling half your plate with vegetables and fruits and drinking low fat or non-fat milk as your beverage.

Even when you do consume foods with higher caloric densities, try to keep those calories as close to the weight of the food in grams as you can. Certainly a roasted skinless chicken breast that weighs 84 grams and has 138 calories is lower in caloric density than a fried chicken breast that weighs 84 grams and has 198 calories.
**Topping for Pancakes, Waffles or French Toast**  
Makes 1 generous serving

½ cup frozen blueberries, unsweetened  
½ cup frozen sliced peaches, unsweetened  
1 teaspoon cornstarch  
1 teaspoon cold water  
1 packet sugar substitute or 2 teaspoons sugar

1. Place fruit in microwave-safe glass dish.  
2. Mix cornstarch and water in small cup.  
3. Add this mixture to the fruit along with the packet of sugar substitute or sugar. Stir and cover with a lid or plastic wrap.  
4. Microwave on medium-high for 2 minutes. Stir; cook for another 1 minute or until fruit sauce is thickened.  
5. Stir again and serve on top of 3 pancakes, 2 waffles or 2 pieces of French toast. (If desired, add 4 chopped pecans or walnut halves to the mixture before microwaving.)

**Nutrition analysis for sauce with sugar:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Carbohydrate</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Total Fat</th>
<th>Saturated Fat</th>
<th>Trans Fat</th>
<th>Cholesterol</th>
<th>Sodium</th>
<th>Dietary Fiber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
<td>27 grams</td>
<td>0.6 grams</td>
<td>0.5 grams</td>
<td>0 grams</td>
<td>0 grams</td>
<td>0 milligrams</td>
<td>1 milligram</td>
<td>3.5 grams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**With sugar substitute:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Carbohydrate</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Total Fat</th>
<th>Saturated Fat</th>
<th>Trans Fat</th>
<th>Cholesterol</th>
<th>Sodium</th>
<th>Dietary Fiber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>20 grams</td>
<td>0.6 grams</td>
<td>0.5 grams</td>
<td>0 grams</td>
<td>0 grams</td>
<td>0 milligrams</td>
<td>1 milligram</td>
<td>3.5 grams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you add the nuts, you add 31 calories, the fat increases 3.5 grams, the saturated fat remains less than half a gram and the trans fat and cholesterol both remain zero.
Dear Friend,

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Cooperative Extension office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians. Please contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information on these and related topics.

UGA Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension

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Past editions of Senior Sense are available at: http://www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/pubs/

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