

Everything You Need to Know About Termites

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About Termites

A termite is a wood-destroying pest that can mean major damage to your house. These bugs originate from moist soil and are attracted to wet or damaged wood. The professionals at No Pest Metro West have plenty of tips and information about termite control and how to get rid of termites, so keep reading!

Types of Termites

You may be surprised to learn that there are multiple termite species out there. They're attracted to different types of wood, flourish in different environments, but all mean bad news. No matter the species, when they invade, you may need professional help. Here's a quick guide to the differences between each termite species.

Subterranean Termites

Subterranean termites, as their name suggests, originate from underground in moist soil. They require a damp environment in order to survive. Subterranean termites usually target wood that makes contact with the ground, which allows them to access your house.

Drywood Termites

Drywood termites are different from subterranean termites as they do not require moisture to survive. Because of this, drywood termites can build a nest in the dry wood at any level of your house. Drywood termites choose to build their nest in the wood itself. This makes them especially harmful. The longer drywood termites live in the wooden furniture or structures in your home, the more destruction they cause.

Flying Termites

It might be shocking to see termites with wings, but they exist! Flying termites aren't a different species of termite, but a different phase of subterranean termites' life cycle. Flying termites are reproductive adult subterranean termites with wings leaving their original nest to create a new one. If you see flying termites in your home, it means there is an existing colony that is starting to expand.

Formosan Termites

Formosan termites are a type of subterranean termite, but look distinctly different. Formosan termites have a longer body, a differently shaped head, and are usually only found in the southern United States. They're more protective of their nest and more aggressive.

Dampwood Termites

Dampwood termites are much larger than subterranean termites; they're actually the largest in North America. Like other subterranean termites, they need access to moisture and water to survive.

How common are termites in homes?

Termites are very common in homes across the continental United States. This makes sense, as they outnumber humans 10:1. Termites are especially common in warmer areas, as they thrive in heat and humidity. Each year, approximately 600,000 homes are damaged by termites, and homeowners spend \$5 billion on termite control and home repair.

What are the signs of termites in your home?

Termites are usually inside your walls or underneath your home, so it can be tough to tell if you have an infestation. Many homeowners don't realize they have this pest problem until an entire swarm appears, but there are a few other signs that point to termites:

- **Mud tubes outside your home.** Mud tubes are how subterranean termites travel from the ground into your home. These tunnels are about the width of a pencil.
- **Hollow wood.** If you knock along the floors and walls of your home and find that they sound hollow, they may have been damaged by termites.
- **Discarded wings.** When flying termites find their new nest and settle down to reproduce, they shed their wings, never to fly again. Because of this, you might find flying termites' former body parts discarded throughout your home.
- **Frass.** Frass refers to the excrement of drywood termites. Drywood termites release these small pellets near the entrance to their nest. Frass piles up after a while, making it a clear sign that drywood termites are near.

What damage can termites do?

Unfortunately, termites can be outstandingly destructive. This is why termite control is so important. As stated before, homeowners spend billions of dollars each year to fix termite damage. A few ways they can ruin your home include:

- Hollow walls and floorboards
- Holes in drywall
- Weakened support beams
- Maze-like patterns in the walls or furniture. (This is a sign of drywood termites.)
- Peeled-away wallpaper

What causes a termite infestation?

It's not just the presence of wood that attracts termites! Here's a quick guide are a few more specific things that can cause a termite infestation:

- Firewood
- Untreated lumber
- Cracks in exterior of house
- Moisture
- Wood that makes direct contact with the ground
- Excessive moist ground (The perfect environment for subterranean termites!)
- Overgrown plants surrounding the home

Overall, subterranean termites truly love moisture, easy access to the inside of your home, and warm areas. Having a cracked foundation, water damaged-wood, or even tiny fissures in the wood of your house can cause a subterranean termite infestation.

Can you treat termites yourself?

You may be wondering how to get rid of termites on your own. There are plenty of termite treatments you can use to proactively battle these bugs; we even provide a few options below! That being said, make sure you guarantee the safety of every DIY pest control method you try. If you feel uncomfortable with any of these termite treatments, contact the pest control professionals at No Pest Metro West.

How to Get Rid of Termites

Interested in taking the DIY route? Here are two termite treatments to try, even if you're not a pro.

- **Soil Treatment.** Since subterranean termites originate from moist dirt outside your home, it makes sense to treat the outer perimeter of your house. This is done by digging a shallow trench around the base of your home and adding a chemical termite treatment to the area. *(Make sure that the chemicals you're adding are safe for you to handle, and that they're applied correctly.)*

- **Baits.** You can place termite bait throughout your home or outside. These traps lure the termites in and coat them in a slow-acting insecticide. The termites return to the colony, thus spreading the insecticide. *(Make sure that the bait you use for this termite treatment is not easily accessible to children or pets.)*

Frequently Asked Questions

Are termites harmful to humans?

For the most part, no. Termites are way more harmful to your house than to you. Even though they have the ability to bite, they almost never do unless they're provoked. Even if you do end up with a termite bite or sting, these are not toxic. In addition, termites are not known to carry diseases into the home.

How do I know if I have termites or carpenter ants?

Termites and carpenter ants have plenty of similarities, such as their size and the amount of destruction they can cause. That being said, they have distinctly different appearances.

- **Body shape.** The body of an ant has distinct sections, while termites are rectangular without any waist-like area.
- **Antennae.** A carpenter ant's antennae are bent, while termites have straight antennae
- **Wings.** Flying termites and carpenter ants both have 4 wings, but they're distinct. A flying termite's 4 are all the same size, and larger than its actual body. Meanwhile, a carpenter ant's back 2 are shorter than the other two.
- **Color.** Carpenter ants are reddish or dark brown, while termites are light in color, even white or transparent.
- **Visibility.** You're more likely to see ants out and about, while termites avoid the light.

Can termites live in furniture?

Since drywood termites enjoy living in, you guessed it, dry wood, they are the most likely species to occupy furniture. Below are a few of the most common places you may find drywood termites:

- Antique furniture
- Built-in cabinets
- Door and window frames
- Exposed beams
- Wood paneling
- Bed frames

One of the main ways you can tell if a piece of furniture is infected is by tapping on it. If the piece sounds or feels hollow, there's a great chance it has been infected by drywood termites. Another telltale sign is a maze-like pattern on the surface.

What is the first sign of termites?

Usually, the first sign of termites a homeowner sees is a cluster of them somewhere in the home or on furniture. This is unfortunate since when they appear in clusters like this, the infestation has probably already spread throughout the house.

Another early sign that you have a termite infestation is seeing flying termites. As explained before, these are the termites that are leaving their original colony to build a nest of their own. Once you see flying termites, you're almost guaranteed to have a termite infestation.

How can I prevent termites?

Before you have to Google "how to get rid of termites," try some prevention strategies on your own. It's a good idea for any homeowner to focus on prevention, whether or not they live in an area known for termites. Below are a few ways you can decrease your chances of getting a termite infestation.

- **Get a regular termite inspection.** Most of the time, homeowners don't realize there's a termite problem until it's too late. Having experts do a termite inspection of your home can be a great part of your prevention plan.
- If you're doing a home improvement project, **choose termite-resistant wood.**
- **Check for leaks** that may bring moisture into your home, as termites love damp areas.
- Possibly **move storm drains.** Moist dirt attracts termites. So if your storm drain empties too closely to your home, you're more likely to get these destructive, unwanted pests.
- Remove fallen trees, firewood, and any other sources of **dead wood** around your property.