

## House Centipede: typical creepy crawlies...



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### Many Legged Creatures

Not surprisingly, house centipedes look like scary monsters to many people. They fall into that category many people refer to as "creepy crawlies". So naturally when people run across these in their homes, they aren't happy.

### Appearance

The house centipede, *Scutigera coleoptrata*, is an unusual looking creature even among centipedes. It has extremely long legs and long antennae that make it very easy to sight recognize from other centipedes and its millipede relatives. An adult house centipede has 15 pairs of legs. Adults are usually 3-4 inches long from the tips of their antennae to the ends of their hind legs. The body of the house centipede is brownish-yellow in color and has 3 dark, longitudinal stripes that run the length of the body. The legs have light and dark alternating stripes.

### Habitat

House centipedes can be found indoors and outdoors in dark, damp places such as: bathrooms, basements, crawl spaces, beneath concrete slabs, inside piles of firewood, and other perpetually dark places. They normally stay hidden during the day and come out at night to find food.

### Food

House centipedes are predatory and will attack and consume nearly any small creature that they can physically handle. A typical list of insects and arthropods that house centipedes prey on indoors includes: silverfish, firebrats, carpet beetle larvae, cockroaches and spiders.

## School Impacts

Although house centipedes are not commonly a problem in schools, they can be a problem for children who are allergic to their bites. Bites normally happen when the centipedes are harassed and typically cause localized pain that goes away within a few hours.

## Management

All pests have certain food, water, and habitat requirements to live and breed successfully. The first and most important step to managing house centipedes is to manage their food sources. Since house centipedes depend on a steady supply of prey indoors, a large population of them indicates a bigger pest problem in the building. Identify what prey the centipedes are going after and target them rather than the centipedes. Usually a few simple steps can reduce other pest problems:

1. Clean up any junk or debris piles in an around the house to eliminate pest habitat.
2. Seal cracks and crevices around buildings and caulk around windows, fixing any holes to prevent pest entry.
3. Fix any leaks and install drain guards to keep pests from climbing up through pipes.
4. Put out sticky traps around the structure to monitor the presence and number of pests to determine if further action is needed.

These simple steps should help reduce pest populations around a structure. However, if pest populations are unusually large, it may be necessary to bring in a pest professional to help decide on the next course of action depending on the pests that are present. When other pests are eliminated, house centipedes go elsewhere to find food.

## Centipedes and Millipedes What's the Difference?



**Centipede**

Eugene E. Nelson, Bugwood.org

Although centipedes and millipedes have similar appearances, they have some pronounced differences in habits and biologies. If you happen to find one and want to know if it's a millipede or a centipede, there's an easy way to tell the difference. They both have visibly segmented bodies. Each segment is easily distinguishable from the one in front of and behind it. Centipedes have one set of legs (2) on each segment. Millipedes have two sets of legs (4) on each segment. Just count the legs!



**Millipede**

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