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Painless Pest Control
By Becky Karush

Changing seasons can bring ants, spiders, rodents, and other unwelcome guests into your home. So it’s never too early to start thinking about how to protect your family from these critters. Here are four ways to help you decide if regular home pest control is worth the expense.

- **Try basic prevention first.** The Environmental Protection Agency offers a comprehensive guide to controlling household pests, including ants, mosquitoes, ticks, and rodents, which are among the most common culprits across the U.S. If a problem occurs despite these steps, you may need a professional to assess the situation.

- **Identify the problem pest.** If you can pinpoint the species, you’ll have a better chance of eradicating it yourself. Search the “Pest Control” section of the National Pesticide Information Center website or call your local extension service to help identify the critter. If identification proves difficult, a professional can help determine the problem. In addition, you might consider paying for regular home visits if your property includes woods, water, and/or vegetable gardens or fruit trees.

- **Learn about pest health risks.** Once you know which household invader you’re dealing with, you can research the threat it poses to you and your family. Cockroaches, for example, have been found to trigger asthma. Recurring infestations may warrant regular professional attention.

- **Find out if one-time pest control will prevent future infestations.** If you’re losing the battle against returning intruders, it may be worth hiring professional help for year-round service. A pest control professional can help maintain preventive steps so your house is protected against infestations as the seasons change.

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