



Unlike other insect infestations, termites can destroy homes from the inside out. They do so by eating homes' wooden skeleton and foundation. As such, it is best to be educated on these pests before it's too late. With that in mind, there are eight important questions to be asked in regards to termites.

What are termites?

Termites are insects that feed on wood. Preferring to live in dark or subterranean spaces, the foundations and walls of houses often make perfect sites for infestations. On those occasions, the colonies can reach population numbers in the thousands if left unchecked.

What do termites look like?

When identifying termites, look for wings of equal length and straight antennae, rather than bent. As for coloration and size, there are three distinct variants of termite. Worker termites, which collect food, are white colored and can range from 1/4 to 1/2 inch in length. Soldier termites, which protect the colony from outside threats, have white bodies and dark-colored heads, and can range from 2/3 to 3/4 inch in length. Reproductive termites, which are responsible for procreating, are either black or light-brown, and range from 1/4 to 1/2 inch in length. Due to the presence of wings and antennae, reproductive termites are often confused with flying ants.

Do termites have wings?

Only reproductive termites have wings that grow once the insect has reached the point of sexual maturity. This allows new reproductive termites to fly away from their birthplace and start colonies of their own. Oftentimes, these wings are shed once they've found a suitable locale.

What do termites eat?

Termites eat dead plants and trees. They gain nourishment from cellulose, which is commonly found therein. Cellulose is also found in wood, which makes up the majority of a termite's diet. A colony's location is dictated by the termites' preference. In subterranean colonies, damp, moist, or decaying wood is preferred. Colonies that infest homes, however, are content without moisture.



Where do termites come from?

Termite colonies thrive in areas corresponding to their dietary needs. These can vary between dry, damp, and subterranean environments. Drywood termites may enter your home by way of nearby trees, new furniture, or firewood. Dampwood termites often enter your home at ground-level. These can include dog doors or water drainage chutes. Subterranean termites need soil to operate. While their colonies may be based in the yard, under a branch or tree stump, they may build underground tunnels to their next food source, like your home's foundation.

What are the signs of having termites?

There are several symptoms of a termite infestation. If your home shows any of the following signs, contact a pest control inspector for further inspection. These signs may include:

- Small holes in drywall
- Hollow wood
- Earthen packing
- Mounds of droppings near entry points
- Piles of shed wings
- Mud tubes along the foundation or walls
- Maze patterns in the walls and floors

How can one prevent future termites?

There are simple methods to protect a home against termite infestations. Methods to consider include the following:

- Sealing all cracks in the home's foundation
- Covering a majority of wood-to-soil contact areas in plastic sheeting
- Repairing broken roof tiles
- Keeping moisture leakage from air conditioners
- Ensuring that wooden furniture is minimally away from the wall
- Repairing leaky pipes
- Removing all tree stumps from the yard
- Storing firewood off the ground

- Using fenceposts of materials other than wood

How can one resolve an infestation?

If a home has termites, it is advisable call an exterminator immediately. Depending on the severity of the infestation, the exterminator will suggest one of several options:

- Bait
- Physical barrier
- Chemical barrier
- Fumigation

Termite baiting involves the dissemination of lethal poison to worker termites, which slowly radiates to the rest of the colony. Physical barrier options might include the coverage of all soil spaces in an impermeable layer, such as plastic. Chemical termite barriers are sprays that can act as either an exterminator or deterrent. When all else fails, fumigation is the last option.

Otherwise known as termite tenting, this form of chemical termite treatment will immediately resolve the infestation. The process, which involves covering the home in a large tent, blasts every nook and cranny with termite-killing gas. While the process and subsequent aeration takes approximately 30 hours, homeowners are mandated to stay out of their home's premises for at least three days. When it is time to go home, however, the termite infestation will be no more.

In the event that these options are applicable, it would be wise to begin choosing a pest control company. Our breakdown of the [top 10 pest control services](#) would be a great resource.