Cockroaches are a common household pest in many parts of the world, including Philadelphia, thanks to our often warm and damp climate. There are two species of cockroach that are commonly found in our region: American and German cockroaches. American Cockroaches (*Periplaneta americana*) are the larger of the two species, about two inches long and reddish-brown with large wings that enable them to fly; German Cockroaches (*Blatella germanica*) are smaller, averaging about half an inch (13 mm) with a brown color, and cannot fly. Both species of cockroach can eat almost anything: food, whether fresh or decaying; waste products; soap, glue, and other materials. They are hardy insects: they can withstand long periods of starvation and can live for many days without water. They also breed like crazy: female German cockroaches mother at least 240-300 baby cockroaches in a lifetime.

German cockroaches prefer to hide in small spaces such as in cabinets, especially in damp areas like kitchens and bathrooms; American cockroaches often are found exploring larger spaces, like your living room floor. They are all sensitive to light, and turning on a lamp in your room may send them skittering off to hide.

Roaches can move very quickly; while they are disgusting and frightening to many people, they are not immediately dangerous; they do not bite and are not poisonous. Much like flies, however, they can carry toxic or poisonous substances from place to place and can transfer them to food or other surfaces by tracking it onto them or by defecating on it.

How can I prevent roaches from moving in?

Cockroaches live in groups and like warm, humid, dark places, so your room may have ideal spots for them to take up residence. The very best way to prevent roaches is to keep them out of your room in the first place, with proper sanitation practices.

There are two important things to remember when trying to keep roaches from becoming your new roommates:

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1: DO NOT FEED THEM.

- Do not leave food out over night; keep all food stored in a refrigerator or in insect-proof containers made of plastic, metal, or glass with tight-fitting covers.
- Wash your dishes, pans, and utensils as soon as you are done using them.
- Remove all food or spilled drinks from counter tops and clean counters, sinks, and tables with soapy water.
- Vacuum all cracks and crevices to remove debris and food. Also sweep or vacuum any food and debris on floors.
- Take garbage out daily in closed plastic containers; keep waste containers washed and clean. Recycle cans and bottles on a regular basis; wash and clean containers that hold recycling items.
- Keep kitchen appliances such as toasters, toaster ovens, microwaves, stoves, ovens, and refrigerators free of crumbs and other food debris. In addition, clean the areas around these appliances.

2: DO NOT GIVE THEM A COMFY PLACE TO LIVE.

- Air out places where dampness is a problem.
- Remove boxes, especially if they’re made from corrugated cardboard, newspapers, bags, and get rid of other unnecessary items that can clutter rooms.
- When storing items, leave space between the packages to prevent making small areas where roaches like to hide.

What do I do if I have roaches already?

Visit AiM, the Facilities Services website accessible through the PennPortal, to submit a service request for pest control. An exterminator will visit within two business days; the methods used to combat roaches can take five to ten days to be fully effective. If the problem persists, contact your Information Center.