

School Pest Control FAQ

Pests such as mice, cockroaches, bedbugs, lice, ants and silverfish are prevalent in Alberta and often find their way into schools. Established infestations may take some time and concerted effort to resolve. Schools should seek professional pest control management advice when appropriate.

Children are susceptible to adverse effects from illnesses and infections due to age and hygienic practices. As such, it is important to ensure that adequate pest control is occurring within schools.

1. What is the role of Environmental Public Health in a pest infestation?

- Environmental Public Health (EPH) receives reports of pest infestations through public complaints, notification by governing bodies, or routine inspections by our department. Schools can also proactively contact EPH for support about ongoing concerns. Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) can investigate and recommend actions to address the pest infestation.
- In a severe or ongoing infestation, EPH can support schools by liaising between the school (or the school authority) and the pest control company.
- EPH may also assist if the source of pests is suspected to be from another location, such as unsafe student/staff housing.

2. What can a school or its administration do after identifying a potential pest infestation?

- Consider contacting [Environmental Public Health](https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/) online (<https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/>) or by calling 1-833-476-4743.
- Contact a professional pest control company if appropriate to address the issue. Refer to the chart below.
- Eliminate pest food sources and access points to buildings for pests. Please refer to the Pest Control Checklist (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-pest-control-checklist.pdf>).
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that pests might contaminate. Follow the recommended cleaning and handling procedures (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-surface-cleaning-disinfection-gi-outbreaks-child-care.pdf>) for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

3. Who is responsible for addressing a pest issue?

- Everyone plays a role in addressing pest issues, including students, parents, staff and school administration.
- A school authority may have extensive written pest control management plans for schools to follow or hold contracts with pest control companies. Schools should contact their school authority to determine if there is a plan and to report any ongoing issues.
- If a school does not have a higher authority, then the responsibility falls on the school to address the issue.

4. How can schools prevent the infestation of pests?

- Maintain good practices that will prevent infestations, including:
 - Educate students and staff about how their actions affect pest management and control
 - Encourage reporting signs of pests by staff and students
 - Where possible, restrict where staff and students consume foods
 - Clean up food debris from classrooms and common areas regularly.
 - Store food and other items, such as art or science supplies, off the floor and in sealed, plastic containers.
 - Empty garbage bins daily.
 - Check and maintain weatherstripping on exterior doors.
 - Ensure openable windows have screens.
 - Proactively monitor the school for signs of pests, including dead pests, pest droppings, and damaged packaging/signs of nesting.
 - Place monitoring pest traps in/around the school and check them frequently.

5. Where should schools monitor for pests?

- Monitor for pests in and around the school in the following places.
 - Food areas where staff and students consume food (e.g., lunches, snacks), including cafeterias, kitchens, staff rooms, and classrooms/gyms;
 - Cluttered areas where pests can hide and thrive, such as desks, lockers, and closets;
 - Warm, damp, or poorly ventilated areas, such as gyms or locker rooms;
 - Outdoor garbage/dumpster areas, especially if located close to school buildings;
 - Neglected landscapes, including school grounds and athletic fields.

6. When are in-house (conducted by school staff) pest control methods acceptable?

Pest	Is in-house pest control acceptable?	Details
Bedbugs, cockroaches, ants and silverfish	No	In-house pest control practices are generally not effective. They are not safe to use in an area occupied by children. Pesticides are usually necessary, and only licenced operators may apply these chemicals.
Mice (severe/worsening infestation in common areas accessed by students)	No	In severe infestations, hire a pest control company to eliminate the infestation.
Mice (localized to an area not accessed by students, such as staff or mechanical rooms)	Sometimes	In-house maintenance professionals can try to mitigate the pest problem on their own, but professional pest control is recommended.
Flies, fruit flies	Yes	In-house pest control, such as sticky traps, is acceptable if they are routinely changed and are not accessible to children.

Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at ahs.ca/eph.

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