

TERMITES

We all know the saying “There are two types of homes in New Jersey, those that have termites and those that will get them”. It is important for homeowners to recognize the signs of a subterranean termite infestation. Subterranean termites may be detected by the sudden emergence of winged termites (alates or swarmers), or by the presence of mud tubes and wood damage. Large numbers of winged termites swarming from wood or the soil often are the first obvious sign of a nearby termite colony. Swarming occurs in mature colonies that typically contain at least several thousand termites. A "swarm" is a group of adult male and female reproductives that leave their colony in an attempt to pair and initiate new colonies. The presence of winged termites or their shed wings inside a home **should be a warning of a termite infestation**. Other signs of termite presence include mud tubes and mud protruding from cracks between boards and beams. Or on the sides of our foundations. Subterranean termites transport soil and water above ground to construct earthen runways (shelter tubes) that allow them to tunnel across exposed areas to reach wood. Shelter tubes protect them from the drying effects of air and from natural enemies, such as ants. These tubes usually are about 1/4 to 1 inch wide, and termites use them as passageways between the soil and wood. To determine if an infestation is active, shelter tubes should be broken or scraped away and then monitored to determine whether the termites repair them or construct new ones. Houses should be inspected annually for mud tubes. Avoid moisture accumulation near the foundation, which provides water needed for termite survival. Divert water away from the foundation with properly functioning downspouts, gutters, and splash blocks. Soil needs to be graded or sloped away from the foundation in order for surface water to drain away from the building.

Termites feed slowly so there is no need to panic if they are discovered in one's home. A few weeks or months may be needed to decide on a course of treatment, which typically requires employing a professional pest management firm. Homeowners seldom have the experience, availability of pesticides, and equipment needed to perform the job effectively. Consider getting at least three estimates before signing a contract for control measures, and be cautious of price quotes that are substantially lower or higher than the others. Prices for inspection, treatment estimates, and conditions of warranties often vary considerably. A guarantee is no better than the firm who presents it. It is important to take your time to select a reputable pest management firm. Deal only with licensed, certified pest management firms having an established place of business and a good professional reputation. Ideally the firm will belong to a city, state or national pest management association. It is a good idea to consult the licensing agency in your state to determine a firm's complaint history. Regularly inspect cracks or joints in concrete slabs for evidence of termites. Remove any mulch that contacts siding or obscures a clear view of the foundation. I had termites in the garage of my Staten Island high ranch house. I called in a friend who was a licensed contractor and he treated the whole house by drilling into the basement slab in two dozen places including through the sides that were above ground on the outside. Five years later I went to plug in the vacuum cleaner in the basement and the outlet just fell away. My whole center bearing wall was infested with termites. They came up through a minute crack over the center support footing. They had gone right up the eight foot 2' x 4's and were spreading horizontally into the floor supporting 2' x 8's. When I called the guy back he said he had never seen them go that high. Lucky me! I had to replace 25' of 2' x 4' studding and paneling and sister a dozen of the 2' x 8's. The

lumber looked like the day it was bought from the outside but you could crush them with your bare hands. Amazing! I was lucky the place didn't cave in. Later on I realized there was a damp smell in the basement from their mud and that when walking in the upstairs hallway the floor was creaking. I just thought the house was getting older.

As always, check this and other tips at - <http://www.aaazzz.net/id5.html>

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