House Centipedes

(House Centipede – *Scutigera coleoptrata*)

House centipede (adult)

Long legs make it look bigger than it is

Identification – The house centipede is the fast, leggy thing that shoots across the basement floor or turns up in the tub. The body is only about 1 to 1½ inches long, grayish-yellow with three dark stripes, but the 15 pairs of long, banded legs and very long antennae make it look 3 or 4 inches across. It's pretty common around here.

Are they dangerous? – No. House centipedes are harmless to people and feed on other small insects and spiders. Like any centipede they can bite if you pick one up, and that can feel like a bee sting, but bites are rare and not dangerous. They don't damage the house or get into food.

What we find – They prefer damp, dark areas like a garage or basement. They hide during the day in cracks in the slab and block walls, under boxes stored on the floor, around floor drains and sump pits, and in crawl spaces, and come out at night to hunt. Seeing a lot of them usually means two things: extra moisture, and plenty of other bugs for them to eat.

What works – **Fix the conditions they like.** "Sealing" them out is all but impossible, because centipedes come in through the tiniest of cracks. Usually we recommend vacuuming them up. Drying out the basement and cutting down the insects they feed on is what brings the numbers down. If you're seeing a lot of them, an outdoor treatment can reduce the overall activity coming in from outside.

What you can do – A few things help. Vacuum up any you see, run a dehumidifier in the basement, and fix leaks and sweating pipes. Get boxes up off the basement floor (plastic bins are better than cardboard) and cut down on clutter. Keep mulch, leaves and firewood pulled back from the foundation. Glue board traps in the basement and utility room will catch centipedes and show you what else is crawling around for them to eat.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if you're seeing them regularly in living areas, or seeing other bugs along with them. Our regular exterior service reduces the insects they hunt and the centipedes coming in from outside. And if you're not sure whether it's a house centipede or something else with a lot of legs, send us a photo and we'll identify it for you.