



FACT SHEET

Centipede

The house centipede, *Scutigera coleoptrata*, has (when fully grown) 15 pairs of very long, delicate legs and a rigid body, which enables it to run up walls and along ceilings and floors. They have as few as four pairs of legs when hatched, but gain a new pair with each moulting. They live anywhere from three to seven years, depending on the environment.

The body is yellowish grey and has three dark-colored dorsal stripes running down its length; the legs also have dark stripes.

House centipedes feed on spiders, termites, cockroaches, silverfish and other household pests. They do not cause damage to food or furniture. They kill their prey by injecting venom through their poison fangs and then feasting on the dead prey. For this reason, house centipedes are considered among the most beneficial creatures that inhabit human dwellings, but because of their alarming appearance few homeowners are willing to share a home with them.

It is difficult for a house centipede to bite a human, and the effect is approximately that of a bee sting. It can cause problems for those allergic to the toxin.

The head is on the left in this shot - difficult to tell. The antennae and rear legs are longer than the body.

