Millipede Identification & Biology

What Do Millipedes Look Like?

By DoMyOwn staff

OVERVIEW



Millipedes are segmented insects that are often confused with centipedes. While they won't bite or sting, large amounts of millipedes can be a nuisance, especially if they get inside your home or building.

Read our guide below to identify what millipedes look like.

Millipedes vs. Centipedes



Millipedes and centipedes are often confused for one another. A few differences between the two:

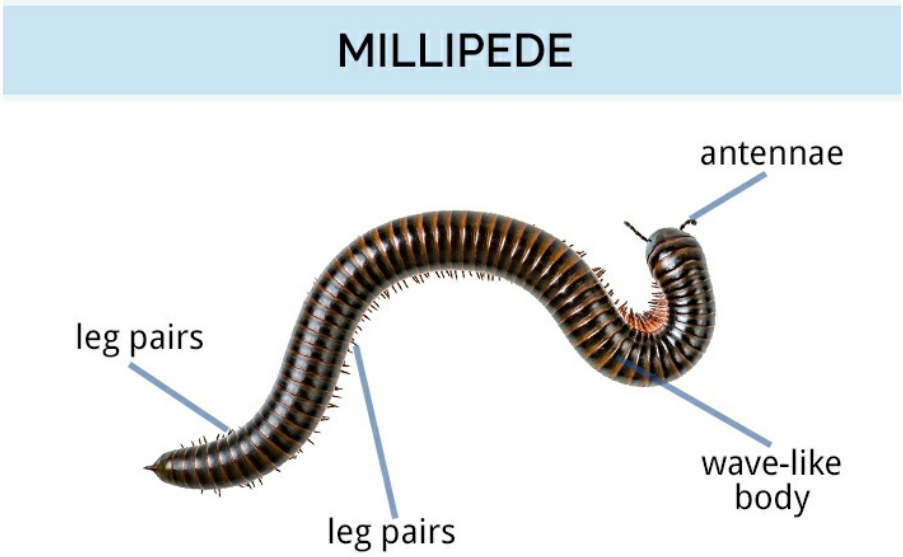
- Millipedes have 2 pairs of legs per body segment while centipedes have 1 pair of legs per each body segment
- Millipedes move slowly, while centipedes move quickly
- Millipedes mostly eat decaying organic matter. Centipedes are carnivorous, injecting their prey with venom to kill before eating.
- Millipedes do not bite. Instead, when scared, they will secrete a sticky substance that can cause an allergic reaction to humans upon contact. While rare, a centipede may bite humans. These bites are not typically life threatening.
- Millipedes curl into a tight ball or coil as a defense mechanism. Centipedes do not.

SIZE



Most millipedes found in North America will be 1-2 inches long. They grow longer as they age. Some millipedes can grow up to 14 inches long.

SHAPE



Millipedes have long, worm-like bodies divided into many body segments. These segments help the millipedes move in their signature wave-like pattern.

Millipedes have 2-4 pairs of legs per body segment. The legs are barely visible if looking at the millipede from above.

In comparison, centipedes only have 1 pair of legs per body segment, and their legs are longer.

COLOR



Millipedes are typically brown or black. Brown millipedes may appear to be a reddish-brown or rust color.

RANGE



Millipedes can be found across the United States.

Have millipedes? Learn where millipedes are found around the home in the next part of our 4-part guide. Click the right arrow below to read more.