

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## What Do Termites Eat?

Termites are fascinating insects with a unique diet that plays a critical role in their environment. These small creatures are herbivores, which means they only eat plant-based material. Their primary food source is cellulose, a substance found in wood and plant fibers. Let's dive into what termites eat, how they obtain their food, and why their diet is so important.

## What Is Cellulose?

Cellulose is a tough material found in the walls of plant cells. It gives plants their structure and strength. Humans and most animals cannot digest cellulose, but termites have special bacteria in their stomachs that break it down. This allows termites to turn wood and plant matter into food.

## Main Food Sources

Termites eat a variety of cellulose-rich materials. Their favorite food is wood, which is why they are often found in trees, dead logs, and wooden structures like houses and furniture. In addition to wood, termites also consume leaves, grass, and even paper. Some termites, like drywood termites, prefer dry wood, while dampwood termites live in moist, decaying wood.

## How Do Termites Find Food?

Termites use their strong jaws to chew through wood and plant material. Subterranean termites build tunnels underground to reach food sources without exposing themselves to predators. These tunnels also help them find food that is far from their nests. Termites work as a team, with worker termites gathering food and bringing it back to the colony.

## The Importance of Their Diet

Although termites can be pests when they damage buildings, they play an essential role in nature. By breaking down dead wood and plants, termites help recycle nutrients into the soil, making it healthier for new plants to grow. Without termites, forests and grasslands would be cluttered with dead plant material.

Termites may be tiny, but their ability to eat cellulose and recycle nutrients makes them one of nature's most important recyclers.