

Name: _____

Now That's Gross!

By Belinda Vickers Givens

Have you ever heard your mom say, "Close the door so flies don't get in!"? Or maybe she's said, "Please fan those flies!" If you have ever been warned to keep the flies away, there is a very good reason to heed those warnings.



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about a month, their rapid rate of reproduction ensures that they will be around for a very long time.

Flies are considered pests, not only due to the characteristic buzzing sounds that they make, but primarily because they spread numerous diseases. Houseflies have been known to carry a wide range of dangerous pathogens including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and more. These harmful pathogens are transmitted rapidly by flies as they land on contaminated garbage, manure, and other sources of waste and then land on food that will be consumed by humans. Houseflies have been linked to severe cases of food poisoning, diarrhea, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and parasitic worms to name just a few.

Houseflies are generally gray or black in color with a single pair of wings. They have very prominent red eyes that have thousands of individual lenses, which allows them to see at a wider angle. The female housefly



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Houseflies do not have teeth or stingers, and therefore do not bite. They do have very long tongues that they use to suck up their food, very similar to a straw. In order to feed on solid food sources, they must liquify them first. When a housefly lands on your food, it vomits on the food to release an acid that dissolves the food. This allows the fly to suck the food up with its tongue – now that's gross! So please be sure to listen to your mom the next time she frantically says, "Don't let those flies land on your food!"

About the Author



Belinda Givens is an ASHA certified Speech Language Pathologist with an endorsement in Reading. She is a published children's book author and her passion is language and literacy. She is the mother of three amazing young boys who inspire her in incredible ways. You may enjoy reading Belinda's books, The Adventures of Demdem the Garbage Truck - Watch Out for the Bumps and I Am Blessed to Have You.

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1. According to the information in the article, why are there so many flies on our planet if each fly only lives for about one month on average?

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3. Based on the information you learned in the article, identify the four stages in a housefly's life cycle.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article.
Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.



- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. ____ liquify | a. bacteria, viruses, or other microorganisms that can cause disease |
| 2. ____ prominent | b. made impure by added pollutants |



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- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 6. ____ transmitted | f. extreme |
| 7. ____ contaminated | g. the length of time an animal or insect lives |
| 8. ____ severe | h. protruding; bulging; standing out |
| 9. ____ reproduction | i. decaying or rotting |
| 10. ____ lifespan | j. in a distressed way; anxiously |

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In the article, "Now That's Gross!" you learned why many people consider houseflies to be pests. Namely, in addition to their irritating buzzing sound, they are capable of spreading diseases by contaminating food with harmful pathogens.



On the lines below, answer the following question: Do you think if there were no flies on Earth, this would be better for our planet, or worse? Explain your answer. Carefully consider the information you learned in the article, as well as your knowledge of ecosystems and the environment when you share your opinion.



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ANSWER KEY

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1. According to the information in the article, why are there so many flies on our planet if each fly only lives for about one month on average?

Flies reproduce very rapidly, so even though they only live for a short time,

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3. pupa

4. housefly

