

Controlling Bed Bugs at Home



Indiana State
Department of Health

The most safe and effective way to eliminate bed bugs from your home is to hire a licensed pest management professional (PMP). Follow these techniques to help reduce the numbers of bed bugs in a residence until a PMP can be hired.

1 Know where to look for bed bugs.

Although bed bugs can be found anywhere in a home, the majority of them are found in cracks and crevices around where people sleep. Some common areas include:

- The cord around the mattress
- Inside the box springs
- Joints in bed frames and headboards
- Behind picture frames
- In the folds in curtains
- Between the carpet and baseboard
- Joints in flooring and paneling
- Inside electrical outlets
- In the folds and cracks in furniture



2 Get help with identification.

If you find insects that you think are bed bugs, it's important to have them identified by an expert, such as an entomologist at the Indiana State Department of Health (317-351-7190), a PMP, a local Purdue County Extension Educator or the Purdue Plant and Pest Diagnostic Lab (765-494-8081).

There are several bed bug look-alikes in Indiana, and the control strategies for these bugs are different than those for bed bugs.



Bed bug egg



Bed bug eggs, nymphs and adults



Adult bed bug

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Make every bed a bed bug-free “island.”

- Isolate the bed by pulling it away from the wall and not letting any sheets touch the floor. Place the bed legs in bed bug traps. Traps can be found in numerous retail stores or from a PMP. This will prevent bed bugs from getting in the bed.
- Wash and dry all bedding on high heat for at least 30 minutes. Drying belongings on high for 30 minutes will kill bed bugs in all stages of development.
- Encase the mattress and box spring with bed bug-proof mattress encasements. Encasements are widely available at most retail stores that sell bedding. This will prevent bed bugs from escaping infested mattresses and box springs. DO NOT remove encasements for at least three months.
- Vacuum and scrub the bed frame and head board to remove all bed bugs and eggs.
- Steam also can be used (160 degrees Fahrenheit at a rate of 1 foot per 20 seconds).
- Silica gel or EPA-registered diatomaceous earth labeled for bed bug/crawling insect control may be lightly applied in the cracks and crevices of bed frames. These products can be found in stores that sell pesticides.



This bed has been pulled away from the wall, the dust ruffle has been removed, and the legs have been placed in moat-style bed bug traps. The bedding is not touching the floor.



A bed bug-proof encasement to be used for mattresses and box springs.

- These steps should be taken for any piece of furniture where people sleep, including couches and recliners.

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Physically remove bed bugs from the home.

- Thoroughly vacuum the residence to remove as many bed bugs as possible. Be sure to clean the vacuum thoroughly when you are done to remove any bed bugs you swept up. Throw away vacuum contents in an outdoor trash receptacle.
- Use an old credit or playing card to remove any bed bugs that are deep in cracks.
- Place infested belongings in the dryer on high for 30 minutes.
- Belongings can be stored in sealed plastic bags or containers so bed bugs cannot re-infest them.
- Belongings that cannot be dried may be placed in a freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit for four days.

