

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, wingless insects. They cannot fly or jump, but they can crawl – very quickly.

They are about the size of an apple seed; about ¼ of an inch long. They are flat, oval-shaped, and usually a reddish-brown color.

Bed bugs come out at night to feed on warm-blooded animals, including people.



Bed bugs are 1/4 to 3/8 of an inch in size

Do bed bugs spread diseases?

Bed bugs are not known to spread diseases. This is why they are not regulated or reportable. They can, however, cause discomfort, sleeplessness, anxiety, and embarrassment. Scratching the bites can also lead to infection. Insect repellants like OFF!® do not seem to be effective against bed bugs.



Bed bug bites

Why are bed bugs making a comeback?

Although bed bugs were mostly eradicated in the US in the 40's and 50's, they remained prevalent in other areas of the world. Through international travel, bed bugs are coming back to America. Since most people of this generation have never seen a bed bug, they are more likely to bring them home in luggage and clothing.

Banning the use of DDT as a pesticide is also believed to be responsible for their resurgence.

How can I avoid bed bugs when traveling?

Check for bed bugs right after entering your motel room.

- Put luggage in the tub, on a luggage rack or a table, not on the floor.
- Keep the luggage rack away from the walls and the bed.
- Check the mattress and headboard for signs of bed bugs.
 - Pull sheets back and check for dark brown spots on the mattress.
 - Check crevices of mattresses for shed insect skins, live insects or fecal matter.



copyright, 2004 M. Potter University of Kentucky
Bed bugs and their fecal material on a mattress

- If you see signs of bed bugs, notify the front desk and ask to be moved to a room at least 100 feet away.
- To prevent taking bed bugs to the new room, store luggage in a sealed plastic bag and have clothes washed in hot water and dried in a commercial dryer for one hour.

How do I prevent bringing bed bugs home with me?

Bed bugs are efficient hitchhikers and are transported on luggage, clothing, furniture, and other items. Acquiring second-hand beds, couches, and other furniture is another way they can get into previously non-infested dwellings.

- Wash all clothing as soon as it is brought back home. Wash in hot water (120° F) and dry in a dryer set on HOT.
- Carefully inspect suitcases before taking them inside. Scrub with a stiff brush and thoroughly vacuum.
- Seal the luggage in a plastic bag and place it inside a hot car or another hot location for several hours to days.

How do I get rid of bed bugs in my home?

Bed bugs are challenging pests to control because they can hide in so many places. In most cases, it's a good idea to hire a pest control professional. Here are several things you should do:

- Reduce clutter to eliminate hiding places.
- Insect foggers for fleas or roaches will not kill bed bugs.
- Thoroughly clean all rooms. Scrub infested surfaces with a stiff brush to dislodge eggs.
- Dismantle bed frames to find hiding places.

- Remove drawers from furniture. Turn over to search for bugs.



Bed bugs hiding in a screw hole under a night stand

- Spritz bugs with 91% rubbing alcohol. This will only kill bed bugs that you actually spray.
- Use a powerful vacuum to remove bugs from cracks and crevices. Put moth balls in the bag before vacuuming.
 - Seal used vacuum bags in a plastic bag and place in outside trash.
 - Steam clean carpets to kill bugs and eggs that the vacuum missed. Be sure the steam tip reaches 200°F or more.
- Buy special mattress/box spring encasements especially for bed bugs. Seal any holes with permanent tape.
- Pull bed frames away from the wall.
- Place the bed frame legs in bed bug interceptors or plastic dishes of mineral oil (bed bugs can't climb slick surfaces).
- Tuck in sheets and blankets so they don't touch the floor.
- Caulk and seal all holes where pipes and wires go through walls and floors.
- Fill cracks around baseboards and moldings.
- Clean behind picture frames, switch plates and outlet covers; clean inside clocks, phones, TVs and smoke detectors.
- Infested bedding and garments must be bagged and washed in water of at least 120°F and dried in a machine set on HOT for at least an hour. Heat kills bed bugs most effectively.
- Place clothing, toys, shoes, backpacks in a dryer set at high heat for at least 30 minutes.

- Individual items can be wrapped in plastic and placed in a hot, sunny location for several days.
- It may be necessary to throw out infested furniture or mattresses. If you do, slash them or paint a Ø on them so no one else picks them up.

Quick Facts:

- Bed bugs can survive for 10 months to a year with no food (blood meal).
- A single pregnant bed bug can start an infestation.
- Bed bugs can survive 120°F for several days.
- Bed bugs can survive freezing temperatures for several weeks.
- Bed bug eggs are very sticky and difficult to remove, making them efficient hitchhikers.

Dr. Michael Potter at the University of Kentucky is a premier bed bug entomologist.

www.ca.uky.edu/entomology/entfacts/ef636.asp

More good information:

www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vector/bed-bug-guide.pdf

Some information from Southern Nevada Health District brochure

© Harrison County Health Department, TKM, 2010-15

Bed Bugs



Phone 812-738-3237

www.harrisoncountyhealth.com