

Don't let the BED BUGS bite!

Care Provider Bulletin

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What is a Bed Bug?

The common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) is considered a public health pest. Recent increases in bed bugs are thought to be caused by more travel, lack of knowledge, increased resistance to pesticides, and ineffective pest control practices.

Bed bugs are small (about the size of an apple seed, 3/16 to 1/4 inches), but they are visible to the naked eye.

Adults have oval bodies, six legs, and no wings. If they have not fed recently, they are flat and whitish or brown in color. If they have fed recently they are reddish-brown in color and balloon-like.

Young bed bugs are smaller, translucent or whitish-yellow in color, and if not fed recently can be nearly invisible to the naked eye.

Did you Know?

- Bed bug infestations have been on the rise
- They can be very difficult to eliminate once they have infested a home
- They can go months without feeding

Risks of Bed Bug Bites

- Allergic reactions, ranging from an itchy bite mark, to a rash or severe whole-body reaction (anaphylaxis)
- Infection from scratching (which can include impetigo, ecthyma, and lymphangitis)
- Anxiety, insomnia, and systemic reactions for people living in infested homes

What Increases the Risk of Bed Bugs?

- Clutter
- Frequent travel
- Introducing infested furniture, bedding, or clothing into a home



Why?

- The more clutter, the more places for bugs to hide
- Bed bugs can travel in suitcases or clothing
- Furniture or clothing that is infested may be discarded or donated by others - check before bringing it into your home!

What Can Happen?

- Concerns about safety and cleanliness of the environment
- You and visitors can transfer bed bugs to cars, offices, and other homes
- Complicated and costly pest removal
- Bites may cause or lead to serious health concerns

How do you get rid of Bed Bugs?

Treatment:

- Heat treatment is the most reliable treatment, especially for homes that are cluttered or where preparation is a struggle. However, temperatures need to be over 110 degrees for a long period of time - so you cannot do this method yourself. The average cost for professional heat treatment is at least \$800 to \$2,000.
- If you are doing it yourself, you will need to be committed to a long process, including pre-treatment and several treatment phases. Chemicals alone will not take care of an infestation. For more information visit: www.epa.gov/bedbugs/preparing-treatment-against-bed-bugs.

Pre-Treatment:

- Wash clothing, bedding, draperies, and all other washable items in hot water and dry in dryer on high heat for at least 30 minutes
- Look for and remove visible bugs and eggs from furniture, baseboards, behind outlet and switch covers, and flooring cracks
- Vacuum everything and throw away the bag
- Take care when you are treating not to move infected items to non-infected areas

What Can You do to Prevent Bed Bugs?

Cleaning & Maintenance

- Keep areas free of clutter
- Vacuum often
- Shake out suitcases after traveling
- Use hot water when washing clothes and bedding
- Keep clothes off the floor
- Caulk cracks and crevices around baseboards

Furniture

- Inspect second-hand furniture, especially beds and couches, prior to bringing it into your home
- Use bed-bug-proof covers over mattresses and box springs to trap and starve any bugs and to prevent them from living in bed
- If bed bugs cannot be removed from furniture, destroy furniture rather than donating it so that you don't pass on the problem

Tell-tale signs

- Small black droppings or small blood stains under mattress
- Visible bugs in mattress and furniture seams
- Multiple bites, typically in straight rows on arms and shoulders



More information:

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

www.epa.gov/bedbugs

www.bed-bugs-handbook.com