

BED BUGS

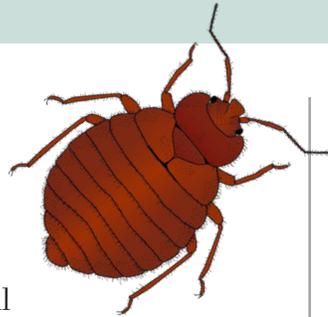
A FACTSHEET FROM SAFER PEST CONTROL PROJECT



Bed bugs are making a comeback, big-time, and can be found just about anywhere; from warming shelters to four star hotel rooms. No one really knows why they have returned, but these little bugs are determined to stick around. Although bed bugs are tiny they can cause major headaches because they're so difficult to find. Use the tips below to help control this stubborn pest.

BIOLOGY

Understanding how bed bugs eat and live can help you get rid of them.



- Adult bed bugs are flat, small (less than ¼ inch long), oval-shaped and wingless. Before feeding they are amber colored, after they are a rusty red color.
- They feed on blood and attach themselves to their favorite meal: humans and animals. Bed bugs need blood to grow and can live **up to one year on a single feeding**.
- Bed bugs are nocturnal. They look for their meal at night while people are asleep.
- Bed bugs move around by hitching rides on clothing, furniture, bedding, and baggage. Bed bugs will live in any crack or crevice in or around your sleeping areas.

HEALTH ISSUES

- Not known disease carriers.
- Bites can cause an allergic reaction with swelling, redness, and itching.
- Skin infection and scarring can result from scratching.
- The majority of people do not react to bed bug bites.
- Lack of sleep is a serious side-effect causing reduced alertness, loss of productivity and mood problems.

PREVENTION

Bed bugs are hard to prevent because of their small size, night habits and ability to hitchhike. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Start by **sealing the building or unit** with caulk and making sure all windows and doors fit tightly. If there is light coming from under a door, install a rubber or brush door sweep along the bottom. This will prevent more than just bed bugs from getting into the house.
- **Paint and caulk bed frames** to seal hiding spots.
- **Inspect previously owned items** thoroughly before bringing them home. Look for groups of small white eggs and red-brown bed bugs stuck in fabric, cushions or small openings on furniture. Do not pick up items that were thrown out, because you could bring someone else's problem home.
- **Take a look around mattresses and furniture** when staying in a unfamiliar place. Bed bugs can hitch a ride home on your clothing or luggage.



BED BUGS (cont.)



CONTROL

Be persistent!! Getting rid of bed bugs will require many different steps over several weeks. Be patient and persistent and you will succeed.

- **Find out where they are hiding.** Bed bugs don't just stay in mattresses (though that is a favorite hiding spot). Look along baseboards, under and behind dressers, and any other dark hidden areas nearby.
- **Monitor their movement** by using double-sided tape around the perimeter of your bed or wrapped around bed legs. This will help show you if the bed bugs are living in or outside of your bed.
- **Carefully vacuum** infested areas using a bagged vacuum. Dig the hand held nozzle into and along furniture to help remove eggs. Be sure to **tightly seal the vacuum bag** and dispose it outside the home. Vacuuming alone will not eliminate an infestation.
- **Steam clean furniture** & other surfaces to kill remaining bugs and hidden eggs. Handheld steamers are widely available in stores and online. Bed bugs are vulnerable to high temperatures (above 120°F). Pass the steamer slowly over infested surfaces. Always use caution to avoid burns.
- After cleaning, **encase mattress in a zippered bed bug proof cover – duct tape the zipper.** Leave cover on for **at least one year** and pull bed away from the wall. Keep bedding from touching the floor by tucking it in. Change sheets often.

- **Wash all linen, laundry and other infested clothing articles in hot water.** Dry on the highest possible setting. Unwashed, unwashable and dry “dry clean only” items can be put in the drier for at least 20 minutes to kill bed bugs.
- Depending on how bad the infestation is, **you may or may not have to throw out your mattress.** If you or your pest control operator decide it is best to throw it away, do so **responsibly.** Make a sign or slash the mattress so that someone else doesn't pick up the problem and bring it home.
- **Label discarded infested items carefully** to let people know not to pick them up and take them home. Otherwise, bed bugs will continue to show up in the community.
- **Do not use chemicals around sleeping areas** and furniture unless they are properly labeled to treat these surfaces for bed bugs.
- **Call 311 and file a report.** Be sure to get a report complaint number.
- If you are renting, **notify your landlord about an infestation right away.** You have the right to live in a safe and habitable environment. Work with your landlord to prevent the spread of bed bugs.

Remember, there is **no magic formula** that will guarantee bed bug elimination. These tips are not intended to replace a select treatment program by knowledgeable professionals. The use of pesticides may be necessary. If possible, seek professional advice before applying pesticides for bed bugs especially around people with health conditions.

REFERENCES

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Safer Pest Control Project is dedicated to reducing the health risks and environmental impacts of pesticides and promoting safer alternatives in Illinois.

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