



Identifying and Preventing Bed Bugs

How to recognize a bed bug?

From its appearance

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mainly on human blood. A newly hatched bed bug is semi-transparent, light tan in color, and the size of a poppy seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, have rusty-red-colored oval bodies, and are about the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs can be easily confused with other small household insects, including carpet beetles, spider beetles and newly hatched cockroaches (nymphs).



From its markings, droppings and eggs

Blood stains, droppings and eggs can be found in several locations including:



- Mattress seams and tufts, sheets, pillow cases and upholstered furniture.
- Crevices and cracks in furniture.
- Baseboards of walls.



From its bite

Some people do not react to bed bug bites. But for those who do, bite marks may appear within minutes or days, usually where skin is exposed during sleep. They can be small bumps or large itchy welts. The welts usually go away after a few days. The bites may look like other insect or mosquito bites; a bump or welt alone does not mean there are bed bugs.



How Bed Bugs Grow and Reproduce?

Bed bugs are most active when we sleep. They crawl onto exposed skin, inject a mild anesthetic and suck up a small amount of blood. Most people never feel the actual bite. Bed bugs need a blood meal to grow and lay eggs. A female lays 5-7 eggs per week and if fed, will lay 200-500 eggs in her life. Eggs take about 10 days to hatch. Bed bugs are fully grown in 2 to 4 months and can live as long as a year.

The Health Effects of Bed Bugs

Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

- Bites can be very itchy and irritating. Most welts heal in a few days but in unusual cases, the welt may persist for several weeks. Usually an anti-itching ointment will help. If bites become infected, see a doctor.
- The anxiety about being bitten can lead to sleeplessness, which can affect one's well being. Get rid of bed bugs in a proper and effective way to help keep anxiety in check. Do not use illegal or excessive amounts of pesticides, this can lead to poisoning.

Signs and Prevention of Infestations

Bed bugs can enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage and clothing, and by traveling along connecting pipes and wiring.

Signs

- Insect bites that after sleeping are usually the first sign of an infestation.
- Live or dead bed bugs are found.
- Dark stains on fabric (from the excrement and blood).

- Fresh blood will be found on bedding (person rolls over and crushes the bed bug(s)).
- Heavy infestations may leave a sweet musty odor.
- Bed bugs are often found along bed mattress, seams, crevices, box spring, bed frame, and headboard).
- Other areas include upholstered furniture, edges of carpeting, wood molding along the walls, inside electrical devices and in stored items and clutter.

Prevention

- Free and donated items should be carefully examined before bring them home.
- Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home.
- Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs.
- If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can.

Travel tips-

- Travel with clothes that can be laundered in hot water and dried on hot heat for at least 30 minutes
- Use hard smooth luggage
- Keep luggage off the floor and beds. Use luggage racks
- Do not unpack clothing and leave on beds.
- Seal cracks and crevices with caulk, even if you don't have bed bugs. This will help prevent bed bugs and other pests from coming in.

Work tips-

- If your job requires you to visit people's home that you know or suspect have bed bugs, wear dedicated clothing and shoes that are kept in a bag in your vehicle. This prevents taking bed bugs into another person's home, your own, or back to the office.
- Do not sit on the couch or lay any bags on the furniture.
- Check clothing and the bottom of shoes immediately after leaving a person's home and before getting into the vehicle.

Public Transportation tips-

- Check seams and edges of seats for bed bugs or stains before sitting down.
- Keep bags on your lap if possible.
- Use the garment hanger rather than putting clothing on the seats if possible.
- Check your clothing and skin for bed bugs immediately after exiting.

Inspecting Bed Bug

Look for bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs (a flashlight and a magnifying glass will help). Start in the area 10-20 feet (the distance a bed bug usually travels) around where you sleep or sit. Keep a written record of each room and location with signs of bed bugs. This can be shared with a pest control professional.

Inspection Tips

- Check the top and bottom seams, tufts and any rips in the covers of mattresses and box springs.
- Look underneath the bed and along the frame and headboards.
- Use a flash light to inspect cracks and crevices of furniture, windows and door frames.
- Swipe a putty knife or playing card into cracks and crevices to force bed bugs out. A hot blow dryer on a low setting will also work. If live bugs do come out, crush them with a paper towel and throw them away outside.
- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and even screw holes.
- Remove and check zippers, seams and tufts in cushions of upholstered furniture, and their frames.
- Using crevice tools, check paintings, posters, pictures and mirrors.
- Check cracks in plaster and peeling wallpaper.
- Inspect face plates of electrical outlets and light switches by eye only (don't insert anything by wires).
- Look in phones, clocks, smoke detectors and toys.

