

Facts about Bed Bugs

Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite!



What are Bed Bugs?

Small insects (adults are about 1/4 inch long) that feed on the blood of humans and animals. Adults are reddish-brown in color and larva or nymphs are a clear-yellowish color, but when they feed, their bodies swell and become bright red. They can be found in homes, apartments, hotels, hospitals, and other dwellings.

Bed bugs usually feed at night and can go weeks to months without feeding. They nest in close proximity to sleeping and sitting areas. Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease, but their bites can cause large, itchy welts.

National Geographic bed bug video on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfKcCSPCOQo&feature=player_embedded

Signs of a Bed Bug Infestation?

- 1) Bed bug bites can itch and look like a raised red bump or flat welt and are often mistaken for mosquito or flea bites.
- 2) Small, dark spots of bed bug fecal matter on bed linens and around areas where people sleep or sit, which may include:
 - Seams or creases of mattress or boxsprings.
 - Around the bed frame and headboard.
 - Under furniture (chairs, couches, beds, night-stands, chest-of-drawers, etc.).
 - In drawers or drawer rails.
 - Between couch cushions.
 - Under rugs and the edge of carpets.
 - Between curtain folds.
 - Behind baseboards, windows, and door casings.
 - Behind electrical plates, under loose wallpaper, and behind pictures or other wall hangings.
 - Any small cracks in plaster or walls and floors.
 - In telephones, radios, TV's, clocks, etc.
 - In, under, and around floor clutter.

Once in the home bed bugs are mostly found in rooms where people sleep or sit/lay for extended periods of time.



Bed bugs in mattress seam

Photo Credit: A.M. Barbarin, Penn State University

What do Bed Bugs Look Like?

Bed bugs hatch from an egg and go through five larva or nymph stages before becoming an adult. Nymphs are very small and a clear yellowish color, unless engorged with blood. If engorged with blood, they become bright red in color and double in size.



Bed bug eggs



Adult bed bug



Nymph bed bug after feeding



Adult bed bug after feeding

Do Bed Bugs Cause Disease?

Bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, but they do not spread disease to humans and therefore are not considered a public health threat.

How Do I Get Rid of Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs can be extremely difficult to get rid of because they are small, very elusive, transient, and nocturnal. They are very hardy. They can live for a year or more without feeding, and can withstand a wide range of temperatures from nearly freezing to more than 112 degrees Fahrenheit.

Because of how difficult bed bugs are to exterminate, a bed bug infestation is best handled by a professional pest control company. A professional pest control company will know where to look for and detect bed bugs in their many hiding places. They use special tools, equipment, and insecticides, and will know how to completely eliminate them from your home. Removing clutter from around the home will allow you or a professional to more easily find potential hiding places. It also reduces the potential hiding places for bed bugs.

Can I Get Rid of Bed Bugs Myself?

A bed bug infestation is best handled by a professional pest control company. However, if you do attempt to treat bed bugs on your own there are products available in stores and over the internet, such as sprays or dusts. There is no guarantee that such products will work. If you use these products, be sure to read and follow the product's instructions completely.

Also, because bed bugs are small, only come out at night, and hide in small cracks and crevices, they are extremely hard to find and control. You may seek the advice of a professional pest control company on how you should treat your home.

How Did I Get Bed Bugs in the First Place?

Bed bugs don't just magically appear in your home and they do not come in from the outdoors through small cracks and crevices. Bed bugs are great hitch-hikers and usually are carried into your home on things like furniture, clothing, bags, and luggage. Bed bugs can be picked up while spending time in other people's homes that are infested with bed bugs, or while traveling and spending time in a hotel or motel room infested with bed bugs.

If you live in a multi-unit housing complex, such as an apartment building, it is possible that bed bugs come into your place from your neighbor's place. Bed bugs can travel through wall voids, along pipes, wires and cracks in the wall. If you live in a multi-unit housing complex and you find that you have a bed bug infestation, it is important that you report it to your landlord promptly.

A bed bug infestation has nothing to do with cleanliness. Anyone can get bed bugs, so do not feel ashamed or embarrassed. It is important that you communicate to others that may have visited your home so they can take the necessary steps to prevent from getting bed bugs in their homes as well.



Inspecting for Bed Bugs

Signs of bed bugs include small dark blood spots/stains (bed bug fecal droppings) on bedding, furniture, walls, etc. as well as bug bites that appear on your body after sleeping or resting.

Before starting your inspection clean up any and all floor clutter.

Start your bed bug inspection by looking in areas within 10-20 ft where people sleep, rest or sit. Keep a written record of every location where you find bed bugs or signs of bed bugs. Share this record with a professional pest control company.

You will need to thoroughly inspect mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, bedding, bedroom furniture (look inside drawers), and any other furniture where people sleep or sit. Also inspect cracks and crevices in bedroom furniture, flooring, baseboards, walls, windows, and door frames. Look behind torn or peeled back wallpaper; behind picture frames and other wall hangings; behind outlet and light-switch covers; and inspect curtains and blinds. Bed bugs are small and thin and can hide in the smallest of places.



Photo Credit: A.M. Barbarin, Penn State University

Bed Bug Prevention Tips

Bed bugs infestations are becoming an increasing problem throughout the world, in the U.S., and even in Utah. It is important that we all become educated on ways to avoid and/or detect bed bugs to better prevent their spread.

While there is no way to completely prevent bed bug infestations, there are steps you can take to avoid an infestation or detect one sooner, or stop the spread of an infestation. They include:

- Remove floor clutter from rooms in your house (especially bedrooms) and seal wall or floor cracks with caulking.
- Inspect all furniture (especially used furniture) that is brought into your home. Do not take furniture left on the street, even if it looks to be in great condition.
- When traveling, inspect your hotel/motel room carefully for bed bugs. See the steps described above in the "Inspecting for Bed Bugs" section.
- Use the metal luggage rack in the hotel room to store your luggage. If all of your luggage does not fit on the rack, place it in the bathtub or on the bathroom counter. Or, bring large plastic garbage bags with you when you travel and store your luggage and other belongings in the garbage bags. Make sure that the bags are sealed and that there are no holes in them.
- After returning home from a trip, leave your luggage in the garage. Wash all items that were stored in the luggage with hot water and dry on high heat. Then carefully inspect your luggage for bed bugs before bringing it into your home, or just keep it stored in the garage.
- If visiting a place where bed bug activity is suspected, clothing should be changed as soon as possible after leaving the site, and the potentially infested clothing should be placed in a plastic bag until it can be laundered in hot water and dried on high heat for at least 20 minutes.