

Bed Bug Basics

NC Cooperative
Extension
FACT SHEET

What's that bug?

Is it a bed bug, bat bug or carpet beetle? Bed bugs can easily be confused with other types of bugs. It is best to contact a professional for proper identification.

Up to One Year

Bed bugs need blood to stay alive but can go for long periods of time without a host. Some have been known to live up to ONE YEAR without feeding.

It's Not a Matter of Cleanliness

Bed bugs like to feed on humans. They don't care how clean your home is or what type of home you live in, as long as you're in it and available. Anyone can get bed bugs.

Bed bugs are a growing concern. As we travel, they move with us and often hitch-hike from one person's belongings to another. When found, some people throw their used mattresses, night stands and other things to the curb. Do not pick these up and take them home. Bed bugs can live for months without a meal, are most active at night and do not want to be found.

When staying at hotels, travel light but bring a flashlight and large plastic bag. If you really want to search for bed bugs, also bring a magnifying glass, hair dryer and playing card. First, place your luggage inside a plastic bag in the bathroom. Bed bugs were named as such because of their desire to stay as close to the bed as possible. Use the above tools to closely inspect the mattress seams, box springs and headboard for any signs of fecal matter, live bugs or evidence of bugs. Swipe the playing card in cracks and screw holes of drawers and night stands. Bed bugs can travel anywhere from 10 to 20 feet of the bed including behind pictures and in crevices of furniture. If you find bed bugs, protect your belongings, change rooms and report it.



Bed Bugs on discarded furniture



Signs of Bed Bugs



Personal items should not be placed on or near beds until you have determined the room is bed bug free

Size Bed bugs range from the size of a poppy seed when newly hatched to about the size of a grain of rice, depending on the age and whether they have recently consumed blood.

Color Bed bugs range in color from almost white to rusty red to brown.





Don't Let Bed Bugs Bite

Why here? Why now?

The bed bug population has surged due to an increase in international travel, a decrease in routine pesticide training, and an increased resistance of bed bugs to several categories of pesticides. They will not go away on their own and will, in fact multiply fairly quickly. Two bed bugs can turn into thousands in a matter of a few months.

Bed Bugs Bite

One hollow feeding tube injects saliva with anticoagulants and anesthetics while the other tube draws blood for about five minutes. Most do not feel their bite and about half do not have an allergic reaction or rash.



Take Action The minute you find bed bugs, take action. This is not a problem that can be handled alone and the sooner you call a professional, the better. Larger infestations may require several types of treatments (chemical, heat or a combination). If you live in an apartment, townhome or similar situation, contact your neighbors. Bed bugs can travel on electrical wires through walls to infest other homes. If you treat your home without addressing an adjacent home, you could become reinfested.

Heat it up! There are all sorts of heating devices that can assist in eliminating bed bugs. If you have clothing that may have been exposed to bed bugs, you can place most articles in a dryer for 45 minutes. If you have a house full of bed bugs, equipment could be brought in to heat a room to a high temperature for several hours. Please see an experienced professional to learn more. *Smaller items may also be placed in a deep freezer for about a week, depending.

Chemical Dos & Don'ts Home made remedies, outdoor chemicals and foggers do not work on bed bugs. You must seek an experienced professional to gauge what types of chemicals and treatments should be used to control the infestation. See <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/pdf/bedbugs-infested%20items.pdf> for more information.



Bed bugs are developing resistance to various pesticides. To rid of them, you will need an experienced professional. Eradication may take pesticide and non pesticide approaches.



Bed bugs can travel through walls



Heating clothing in the dryer can help prevent bed bugs

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Infosheets for when you want some advice