



BED BUGS

How to Avoid Unwanted Guests

Bed bugs are **not** known to carry and transmit disease, but these nuisances certainly can cause anxiety and demand a great amount of time and energy. There are currently no “over-the-counter” insect repellants that are specifically labeled for these fast-moving nocturnal blood feeding pests. However, there are some tips to reduce the risks of these unwanted and unwelcomed guests.

These measures may be useful for travelers, workers and consumers involved in housekeeping, facilities management, social services and healthcare. Bed bugs are not uncommon in places with a high rate of occupant turnover (such as hotels, dormitories, shelters, apartment complexes, and correctional facilities). Hospitals or extended care facilities are not common sites of bed bug infestation but may be carried in by people or their belongings.

If you are traveling and staying overnight at any type of lodging:

- Ask ahead if there is a problem with bed bugs.
- Carry as little as possible into the room. You may consider putting your belongings in the bathtub or on a hard surface, such as a desk or dresser.
- Inspect the bed and chairs for tell-tale signs before you sit or lie down.
- If you suspect that your lodging is infested, place personal items in plastic bags until laundered or properly handled.

If you are involved in cleaning or maintenance:

- Inspect secondhand beds, bedding, and furniture.
- Frequently vacuum mattress and furniture as well as generally clean living environment. It is important to note that discarding an affected mattress or piece of furniture may be an option. However, a new mattress or chair can quickly become infested if bed bugs are still in the room or house. Steam cleaning is not recommended as a measure to control bed bugs. Do not forget to change and dispose of vacuum bags.
- Routinely launder bedding and clothing. Wash and especially DRY on HOT all clothing, shoes, coats, linens, blankets, and plush toys for 30 minutes to kill bed bugs and their eggs. If items are not machine washable, dry cleaning may be appropriate. Research is underway regarding freezing as an effective treatment for killing bed bugs, without damaging materials.
- Caulk cracks and crevices in the building exterior repair
- Repair cracks in plaster and glue down loosened wallpaper.
- Screen openings to exclude birds, bats, and rodents that can serve as alternate hosts for bed bugs.
- If bedbugs are identified, licensed pest management professional may be required! Space treatments such as “fogging” and “bug bombs” are considered ineffective treatments against bed bugs.

If you are involved in direct care or home visitation:

- Be aware of possible symptoms of bedbugs, such as skin irritations and ask questions about cause, duration, treatment, and recent living arrangements.
- Sitting on a non-cloth chair may be helpful if you are the visitor or for the individual who is visiting you. Bedbugs do not cling to hard surfaces.
- Avoid contact with potentially infested items, such as draperies, rugs, piles of dirty laundry.

If you suspect that your person, home, or office has been exposed:

- Follow many of the same suggestions regarding inspection and cleaning of environment, clothing, and other belongings
- Carefully shake out your clothing while standing on non carpeted floor or outside before returning to your car or work area. The floor area may be wiped with a wet cloth to help contain any bed bugs that may have tried to escape.
- Remove your clothes when you go home, search for any insects and immediately launder washable items. Other items, such as shoes, may be put in dryer for 20-30 minutes.

Awareness and education are keys to the prevention and control of bed bugs. Careful observation and basic understanding of the nature of these “unwanted and unwelcomed guests” will help to stop the invasion of your person and property.

If you would like any more information:

1. Summit County Public Health (www.schd.org)
2. Ohio Department of Health - Bed Bugs (www.odh.ohio.gov)
3. Central Ohio Bed Bug Task Force (www.centralohiobedbugs.org)
4. OSU Extension Bed Bug Fact Sheet (<http://ohioline.osu.edu>)
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)