

Bed Bugs - A Guide for Rental Housing Residents

Bed bugs, with a typical lifespan of 6 to 12 months, are wingless, flat, broadly oval-shaped insects. Capable of reaching the size of an apple seed at full growth, bed bugs are distinguishable by their reddish-brown color, although after feeding on the blood of humans and warm-blooded animals (their sole food source) the bugs assume a distinctly blood-red hue until digestion is complete.

Bed bugs don't discriminate. Bed bugs increased presence across the United States in recent decades can be attributed largely to a surge in international travel and trade. It's no surprise then that bed bugs have been found time and time again to have taken up residence in some of the fanciest hotels and apartment buildings in some of the nation's most expensive neighborhoods.

Nonetheless, false claims that associate bed bugs presence with poor hygiene and uncleanliness have caused rental housing residents, out of shame, to avoid notifying owners of their presence. This serves only to enable the spread of bed bugs.

While bed bugs are, by their very nature, more attracted to clutter, they're certainly not discouraged by cleanliness.

Bottom line: bed bugs know no social and economic bounds; claims to the contrary are false.

Identifying bed bugs

Bedbugs can often be found in, around and between:

- Bedding
- Bed frames
- Mattress seams
- Upholstered furniture, especially under cushions and along seams
- Around, behind and under wood furniture, especially along areas where drawers slide
- Curtains and draperies
- Along window and door frames
- Ceiling and wall junctions
- Crown moldings
- Behind and around wall hanging and loose wallpaper
- Between carpeting and walls (carpet can be pulled away from the wall and tack strip)
- Cracks and crevices in walls and floors
- Inside electronic devices, such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Because bed bugs leave some persons with itchy welts strikingly similar to those caused by fleas and mosquitoes, the origination of such markings often go misdiagnosed. However, welts caused by bed bugs often times appear in succession and on exposed areas of the skin, such as the face, neck and arms. In some cases, an individual may not experience any visible reaction resulting from direct contact with bed bugs.
- While bed bugs typically prefer to act at night, they often do not succeed in returning to their hiding spots without leaving traces of their presence through fecal markings of a red to dark

brown color, visible on or near beds. Blood stains tend to also appear when the bugs have been squashed, usually by an unsuspecting host in their sleep. And, because they shed, it's not uncommon for skin casts to be left behind in areas typically frequented by bed bugs.

Prevent bed bug encounters when traveling

Because humans serve as bed bugs' main mode of transportation, it is extremely important to be mindful of bed bugs when away from home. Experts agree that the spread of bed bugs across all regions of the Unit States is largely attributed to an increase in international travel and trade. Travelers are therefore encouraged to take a few minutes upon arriving at their temporary destination to thoroughly inspect their accommodations, so as to ensure that any uninvited guests are detected before the decision is made to unpack.

Because bed bugs can easily travel from one room to another, it is also recommended that travelers thoroughly inspect their luggage and belongings for bed bugs before departing for home.

Bed bug do's and don'ts

- Do not bring used furniture from unknown sources into your dwelling. Countless bed bug infestations have stemmed directly from the introduction into a resident's unit of second-hand and abandoned furniture. Unless the determination can be made with absolute certainty that a piece of second-hand furniture is bed bug-free, residents should assume that the reason a seemingly nice looking leather couch, for example, is sitting curbside, waiting to be hauled off to the landfill, may very well be due to the fact that it's teeming with bedbugs.
- **Do inspect rental furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into your dwelling.** Be sure to check any rented furniture, including mattresses and couches, for the presence of bed bugs before moving it into your dwelling.
- Do address bed bug sightings immediately. Rental housing residents who suspect the presence of bed bugs in their unit must immediately notify the owner.
- Do not attempt to treat bed bug infestations. Under no circumstance should you attempt to eradicate bed bugs. Health hazards associated with the misapplication of traditional and non-traditional, chemical-based insecticides and pesticides poses too great a risk to you and your neighbors.
- Do comply with eradication protocol. If the determination is made that your unit is indeed playing host to bed bugs, you must comply with the bed bug eradication protocol set forth by both your owner and their designated pest management company.