

Sleep Tight, Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite!

Bed bugs can make life miserable for everyone, many times over! Awareness and prevention measures are a necessary step, partnered with effective treatment measures as soon as these unwanted guests are found.

What do they look like?

Bed bugs start out nearly invisible, about a millimeter of an inch long and grow to less than a quarter of an inch. After they bite they turn a deep red brown, and can swell to nearly the size of a ladybug. Good news...bed bugs have not been found to be carriers of disease. Bad news...their bites itch, burn and can be painful; and they survive a long time in the dormant stage, which means they can move on furniture and possessions, luggage and used items into your housing without your awareness.

Bed bugs have a long survival rate from egg to adult stage, after biting/feeding they can crawl back into hiding for as long as 80 to 140 days.

Bed bugs do not survive in freezing or extreme hot temperatures. They have developed ways of withstanding some chemical treatments, which is why extreme hot and cold temperatures are successful forms of getting rid of the them and are growing in use.

Suggested Actions

Resist picking up discarded mattresses, sofas and cushioned chairs where bed bugs can hide. Any used clothing brought into the home should be placed in plastic bags to be transported, and bags disposed of once items are placed in washer. All used clothing, linens, stuffed toys should be washed in very hot water, dried on highest heat setting or dry cleaned to ensure no bed bugs are being introduced into your home. Anything that can go into a dryer for 20 minutes on the high setting can be decontaminated rather than thrown away.

Encase your mattress and box springs with a durable, leak-proof cover recommended for dust mites. This will trap existing bugs inside to prevent them from surviving and biting and keep new bugs from entering. There are cheap covers that over time will crack, or permit bugs to get through the zippers and zipper locks, so tightly woven cloth covers with encased zippers/zipper locks are highly recommended.

Furniture and other large items likely will need professional treatment. It has been suggested placing a couch or mattress outside, overnight in freezing temperatures will kill the bugs.

Do not move from one apartment to another knowing you have bed bugs in any of your possessions, without taking care of the problem first. The bed bugs will stay behind, and the bed bugs will move with you, and the problem will be doubled. It is better to take steps to treat your possessions immediately and notify your landlord, so the property can be inspected and treated before you move. The bugs also like to hide in wall outlets, which will require treatment to prevent them from remaining in the apartment.

Something to think about! In 2009, the City of Fort Collins and Colorado State University as a precaution cancelled an event called the "Great Sofa Roundup" which in the past saw as many as 600 used-couches change hands. After cancelling this event, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment reported no bedbug reports in the first six months since the used-furniture swap ended.

If residents take steps to prevent bringing bed bugs into their homes, an infestation is likely to not occur. And if the bugs even after taking these measures come in as passengers on the clothing or sleeping bag or bedding or luggage of a guest, take steps as soon as detected to decontaminate your possessions, and notify your landlord immediately that you've found them in the apartment. The sooner action is taken, the more effective it will be. The more proactive you are as a resident, the less chance you have of bed bugs making your life miserable!

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