

Are bed bugs dangerous?

Although bed bugs and bites are a nuisance to people, they are not known to spread disease. However, bites can cause allergic reactions in sensitive people.

How does a home become infested with bed bugs?

In most cases, bed bugs are transported unknowingly into homes, from infested luggage, furniture, backpacks or clothing. Bed bugs can crawl as fast as a ladybug, and can easily move between floors and rooms in hotels or apartment complexes.

Are they a sign of uncleanliness?

Bedbugs don't care if their environment is clean or dirty. All they need is a warm host and plenty of hiding places. Even pristine homes and hotels can harbor bedbugs.

How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?

You may notice itchy welts or see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed bugs, or dark spots from their droppings. Bed bugs often hide in or near beds and bedroom furniture, and in the tufts, seams, and folds of mattresses. They may spread to cracks and crevices anywhere in the home or building. They may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, and other clutter.

Why have bed bugs made a comeback?

The resurgence of bedbugs in developed countries may be linked to increased international travel, changes in pest control practices or insecticide resistance. A female bedbug can lay more than 200 eggs in her lifetime, which typically lasts for about 10 months. Newly hatched bedbugs are nearly colorless, so they are hard to spot. They shed their skin five times as they grow, and need a blood meal for each molt.

Use of Pesticides

Non-chemical pesticides such as diatomaceous earth may be used to control bed bugs. The earth can be applied in crevices, inside electric or phone outlets, around baseboards, etc.

Chemical pesticides can be hazardous to people and pets. Only use insecticides clearly labeled for bed bug extermination. Never use sprays that do not list bed bugs on the label. Follow label instructions exactly. Never spray on mattresses or sofas, or in areas where children and pets are present. Avoid insecticide bombs or foggers in your home, as they can spread hazardous chemicals and are not likely to be effective against bed bugs.

Can I prevent bed bugs from entering my home?

When traveling, use luggage racks in your room rather than setting luggage on the floor or bed. Check the mattress edges and headboard before sleeping. Upon returning home, unpack directly into a washing machine and spin clothing in the dryer for 30 minutes. Inspect your luggage carefully.

Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into your home. Inspect all used items before bringing them into your home.

Sources:

*The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Consumer and Environmental Health Services
Public Health
Sanitation and Safety Program
The U.S. Center for Disease Control
Environmental Protection Agency
Rutgers University
The Mayo Clinic*



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Learn the Facts about Bed Bugs



What, How and Why?

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on the blood of humans and other animals. Adult bed bugs have flat rusty-red colored oval bodies and are about the size of an apple seed. They are big enough to be easily seen, but hide in cracks in mattresses, furniture, floors or walls. Their bodies swell and become brighter red when they feed. They can live several months without feeding on a host.

What does a bed bug bite feel and look like?

Most bites are initially painless, but later turn into large, itchy skin welts. The bite rarely awakens a sleeping person. Welts from bed bug bites do not have a red spot in the center as do flea bites.

How should I treat bed bug bites?

The redness and itch associated with bedbug bites usually goes away on their own within a week or two. You might speed your recovery by using a skin cream containing hydrocortisone or an oral antihistamine, such as diphenhydramine (*Benadryl*). If you develop a skin infection from scratching bedbug bites, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic.

How can I get rid of bed bugs?

The NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) recommends that homeowners hire a pest control professional licensed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). A pest control service should inspect your home to confirm the presence of bed bugs; find and eliminate them from hiding places; treat with special cleaning products and/or pesticides; and make return visits to ensure bed bugs are gone.

If I have a bed bug infestation, what can I do myself?



Find where bed bugs are hiding by looking with a flashlight in bedroom furniture. You can use a hot hair dryer, a thin knife or playing card to force them out of hiding spaces and cracks. Check behind the headboard, in seams and tufts of your mattress and inside the box spring, along baseboards, in and around night stands, in window and door casings, pictures, in clutter, moldings, furniture, loose wallpaper, and cracks in plaster.



High heat (>120°F) kills bed bugs. Wash all bedding, clothing, curtains, plush toys, and other items in hot water and put them in the dryer on the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes. Woolens, shoes and other non-washable items can be placed into the clothes dryer for 30 minutes.



Delicate materials can be bagged and placed in a freezer for several weeks, as cold temperature (<25°F) also kills the bugs.



If it's summer, you can bag up infested items and leave them in a car parked in the sun with the windows rolled up for a day. The target temperature is at least 120°F (49°C).



Scrub mattress seams with a stiff brush to dislodge bed bugs and their eggs. You can cover mattresses with a waterproof, zippered mattress cover labeled "allergen rated" or "for dust mites." Keep the cover on for at least a year. Seal box springs inside a vinyl box spring cover for at least one year. If no cover is available, throw the box spring away.



Vacuum mattresses, bed frames, nearby furniture, carpeting and floors. Immediately put the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it in an outdoor container.



Vacuum and steam-clean carpets.



Dispose of all infested items that cannot be cleaned, and get rid of clutter. Seal discards tightly in a plastic bag and deposit in an outside container.



Seal holes or cracks in plaster and repair or remove loose wallpaper.



Temperatures below 25°F will freeze and kill bed bugs. When it is colder than 25°F, you can place mattresses and furniture outside for several hours. The longer the better.



Install a bed bug barrier under all bed and sofa legs. A commercial bed bug interceptor (CLIMBUP™, Susan McKnight, Inc.) is available to capture bugs that travel between the furniture and floor. The bed or sofa must be pulled away from walls so the bugs can only reach the furniture via the legs.



Actual adult size is approx. 1/8" to 1/4"