

BED BUG EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

They're back and they're bigger than ever: After a decades-long hiatus, bedbugs have made a creepy-crawly comeback in hotels, office buildings, department stores -- you name it -- all across the U.S. In fact, according to a recent poll conducted by the National Pest Management Association (www.pestworld.org), 95% of the pest control companies surveyed reported a bedbug infestation within the last year -- up an astounding 70% from more than a decade ago.

The pesky critters can induce itchy, red welts and enough anxiety to make travelers wonder if they should stay home. Luckily, there are plenty of precautionary measures to reduce the risks of an encounter while on the road. Sleep better at night by following these expert tips (www.nysimp.cornell.edu).

With proper identification, a thorough room inspection, and careful packing and unpacking, you can stop worrying about sleeping tight -- and letting the bedbugs bite.

What Do Bedbugs Look Like?

Wingless bedbugs range in size from 1 to 7 millimeters, are reddish brown, and flat and oval in shape. Adult bed bugs are flat and are the size of poppy seeds. Fecal droppings (brown or black stains that look like pepper flakes), shed skins, and the tinier translucent eggs and nymphs (juveniles) are evidence of the live pest. Blood stains on mattress seams, sheets, furniture, baseboards and crack in furniture are also signs. Lots of other pests are easily confused with bed bugs.

(<http://www.naahq.org/governmentaffairs/issues/bedbugs/Pages/default.aspx>)
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml>

If you Travel, What Steps Should You Take??

If you travel, a hard-shelled suitcase has fewer folds and seams where bedbugs can hide. Pack your belongings -- clothes, toiletries, shoes -- in sealable plastic bags, and open only when accessing the items. Alternatively, consider wrapping your entire pack in a trash bag to stave off potential infestations during your travels. Many travelers throw a suitcase on the bed or keep the bag zipped up on the floor in hopes of keeping out any wandering scourges. Instead, place your baggage -- including any purses, backpacks, or camera bags -- on a luggage rack or in the bathroom, where there are fewer nooks and crannies.

How to Inspect Your Hotel Room and Your Home

Bedbugs like to lodge themselves into cracks, crevices, folds, and ruffles in areas frequently trafficked by humans. When you arrive, pull back the covers of the bed and inspect under the linens and pillows. Use a flashlight if necessary. Look in the seams and sides of the mattress, box spring, and frame, and then check behind the headboard. The majority of the pests away from the bed will be within close proximity: under and around nightstands and lamps, and in the pleats of upholstered furniture (a favored hideaway)

and drapes. The bloodsuckers can also reside behind wall hangings, such as mirrors and paintings.

When You Get Home

Even just a few of these critters can start a full-blown infestation, should you inadvertently carry them back to your abode. Conduct a thorough inspection of your suitcase outdoors or in the garage, away from furniture and sleeping areas. If you live in an apartment, use your balcony, bathtub, or shower (bedbugs have a harder time crawling up smooth surfaces and are easier to spot against light colors). In the worst-case scenario, keep the suitcase out in the hallway. Pay special attention to pockets, linings, and seams. Then thoroughly vacuum or steam clean the bag before stowing it away. Wash all of your clothes -- even those unworn -- on a high-heat setting, and dry for at least 30 minutes. This will kill any previously undetected bugs.

Other Precautions:

Bed bugs can enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage and clothing, and by traveling along connecting pipes and wiring. Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home. Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs. If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can.

How to Clean and Disinfect?

Get rid of clutter to reduce places bedbugs can hide. After checking them for bed bugs, consider putting non-essential belongings into storage until the bed bugs are gone from your home. Check all items again before returning. Wipe off dead bugs, blood stains, eggs and droppings with hot soapy water. Wash all items showing bed bug stains in hot water (140oF) and dry on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes. Other clean items suspected of having bed bugs should be placed in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes to kill bed bugs. After drying, store items in sealed plastic bags until you are sure you have gotten rid of bed bugs. Vacuum carpets, floors, bed frames, furniture, cracks and crevices daily, using the brush and crevice tools. Empty the vacuum or seal and dispose of its bag outside of your home after each use. Enclose infested mattresses and box springs in a cover that is labeled "allergen rated," "for dust mites," or "for bed bugs" for at least a full year. Periodically check for rips or openings and tape these up.

Treatment is Required!

Any bed bug issue must be treated immediately and you must comply with any protocol provided by the company providing the treatment. Follow up treatments are frequently required. Over-the-Counter foggers and bug bombs are not effective against these bugs. Never spray the top of a mattress or sofa.