

BED BUGS

Recognition, Minimization of Exposure, and Treatment



RECOGNITION

- Bed bugs can be very hard to detect. Proper diagnosis requires highly trained professionals.
- Adult bed bugs are brown to reddish-brown, about 3/16-inch long, 1/8-inch wide, broadly oval, and flat.
- Immature bed bugs (nymphs) are tiny and appear clear or pale in color. The eggs are pearly white in color and only 1 mm in length, thus they can be very hard to find with the naked eye.
- Signs of infestation include seeing the bedbugs themselves, their molted skins, or rusty or reddish stains on the bed sheets, mattresses or walls.
- Often people have an itchy red welt or swelling in the area of a bite a day or two after being bitten by a bedbug. The welt or swelling usually occurs on any bare skin exposed while sleeping (face, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, etc.).
- How clean a home is has little to do with most bed bug infestations. Bed bugs only need places to hide and warm-blooded hosts to survive.

PREVENTION

- Bed bugs do not enter homes from the natural outdoor environment; they must be brought in from a previously infested environment.
- Avoid excess clutter as bed bugs like hiding places.
- Be careful about buying second-hand furniture such as beds and couches as this is one way that bugs are brought into previously non-infested homes.
- Concerned travelers may want to check their bed for telltale signs of bedbugs – seeing the bugs themselves, their molted skins or the rusty stains from their droppings. They may also choose to place suitcases on a luggage stand to get them up off the floor in a hotel room.

TREATMENT

- Consult a professional pest control firm to do inspections and treat the infestation.
 - Time, persistence and money are necessary for the best level of control
 - Treatment should be conducted by professionals; do not attempt treatment on your own.
- If infested, follow the recommendations of the pest control firm. Excess clutter should be removed, and in some cases, infested mattresses and box springs will need to be thrown out.
- Since bed bugs can move into other areas of a building, it may also be necessary to inspect nearby rooms and apartments.
- Common areas for professionals to inspect and treat include:
 - Mattresses, box springs, bed frames, the area behind a headboard and upholstered chairs and sofas, especially seam tufts, skirts and crevices.
 - Nightstands and dressers should be emptied and checked
 - Along and under edges of wall to wall carpeting
- Infested bedding and clothing must be washed at a temperature of at least 140° or thrown out since these items cannot be treated with insecticides.
- Site specific vacuuming, using the suction wand, can help remove some of the bugs before professional pesticide application. Throw away the vacuum contents in a sealed trash bag.

TREATMENT OF BED BUG BITES

- Antihistamines and corticosteroids may be prescribed to reduce allergic reactions
- Antiseptic or antibiotic ointments may be prescribed to prevent infection.
- Misdiagnosis is not uncommon. A true diagnosis of bed bug bites should include having red, itchy welts **and** seeing the bugs themselves, their shedded skin or the rusty stains from their droppings.