



Bedbug Inspection and Prevention

A bedbug is a small (about the size of a pencil eraser), flat, reddish-brown bug that can be found in homes all over the world. It hides during the day and comes out at night to look for blood. Bedbugs' flat shape enables them to readily hide in cracks and crevices. The adults have small, stubby, nonfunctional wing pads. Newly hatched nymphs are nearly colorless, becoming brownish as they mature. Nymphs have the general appearance of adults. Eggs are white and about 1/32 inch long.

There are several species of bed bugs, all of which are pests of humans and domestic animals. The common bedbug prefers a human host.

International travel and commerce are thought to facilitate the spread of these insect hitchhikers, because eggs and young and adult bedbugs are readily transported on luggage, clothing, bedding and furniture.

Bedbug populations have increased in the past decade due to the use of baits rather than insecticide sprays for ant and cockroach control. Bedbugs can be a pest wherever sanitary conditions are poor, or where there are birds or mammals nesting on or near a house.

Signs of Bedbug Infestation:

- Small, reddish-brown stains on sheets and mattresses
- Similar stains on other surfaces. These could be entrances to hiding places.
- A sickening, sweet odor
- Bedbugs in the pockets of "popcorn" ceilings and other concealed places

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Prevention

Do not bring infested items into one's home. Travel and commerce are thought to facilitate the spread of these insect hitchhikers, because eggs and young and adult bed bugs are readily transported on luggage, clothing, bedding and furniture. Bedbugs can infest airplanes, ships, trains and buses. Common infestation occurs in hotels or motels. Inspect clothing and baggage for bedbugs and their fecal spots.

Once one female finds a blood meal and is fed, she will start a local infestation. When bedbugs are introduced, they often spread room to room throughout a building.

Caulk cracks and crevices in building exteriors and close off openings to avoid birds, bats and rodents that can serve as alternate hosts for bedbugs.

The best way to avoid being bitten by bedbugs is to keep your room clean. Change your sheets once a week and vacuum the floor often.



Diet and Habit

Bedbugs have a beaklike piercing-sucking mouthpart system and a special ingredient in saliva that keeps blood from clotting while it's eating. They normally feed only at night, but may feed in daylight if their inhabited rooms are not used at night.

Eggs are not known to be placed on the host's body but are found on surfaces near where the host sleeps or nests.

Bedbugs hide in cracks and crevices during daylight hours.

They hide in the folds and tufts of mattresses, coils of springs, cracks, and the upholstery of chairs and sofas. They are not restricted to these places, however. They can also be found behind loose wallpaper, behind pictures on the walls, under door and window casings, and behind baseboards.

Symptom Awareness

Bedbug bites feel itchy. Bedbugs suck blood from their host with piercing mouthparts, but the bite is painless. Bedbug bites look like small red bumps, and they can sometimes occur in a line on the body. The skin may become irritated or inflamed due to the salivary fluid injected by bedbugs. A small, hard and swollen white welt may develop at the site of each bite. Bed bugs are not usually considered to be disease carriers.

Treating Bedbug Bites

If you think you've been bitten by a bedbug, wash the bites with soap and water. Apply calamine lotion or anti-itch cream to help alleviate the itching. Try not to scratch the bites too much, because this can cause the bites to become infected.

If you get an infection from scratching bedbug bites, see your doctor for a medical prescription.

Inspection

In a hotel/motel occupancy, inspect the four corners of each mattress and box spring. Another important place to inspect for bedbugs is the luggage rack or valet. Inspect carefully, concentrating on cracks and crevices. Bed bugs may be found on the luggage rack if they have come in on other travelers' luggage.

Look in any place that offers darkness, isolation and protection. These bugs will often wander. Inspect adjoining rooms where an infestation is found. Even when the bed bugs themselves cannot be found, their hiding places can be located by looking for clusters of dark brown or black spots.

