

Integrated Pest Management Program

Bed Bugs: Facts and Preparation Tips for Treatment

An effective Integrated Pest Management (IPM) pest control system can help eliminate bed bugs. However, in order for the system to be effective, we need everyone's co-operation. If you have bed bugs in your home, it will take thorough preparation and intensive treatment to get rid of them completely. Two treatments will be needed; and in many cases, this is enough to get rid of the pests.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Tim Myles

This booklet contains important information about bed bugs – including facts about what they are, what to look for, and how to prevent bed bugs from being brought into your home. You will also find information on the type of treatment that will be used and what to expect, what you need to do to prepare your unit, and instructions for treatment follow-up.

Bed bugs are not easy to control, but with your co-operation in reporting the problem early and properly preparing your unit for treatment, they can be eliminated quickly and prevented from spreading in your home and the building.

FACTS ABOUT BED BUGS

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that are “bloodsuckers”: they feed on the blood of people other mammals and birds. They often will hide in bedding and upholstered furniture but can hide almost anywhere when well established. Early detection is therefore very important. They are most active at night when they will seek people to feed upon. They can bite anywhere on the skin but most often exposed areas such as face, neck, arms, and hands. Most people will not feel bed bug bites. Some people will have an allergic reaction to the bites.

How do you get bed bugs?

Bed bugs can be brought into your home on used bedding and furniture (especially bedroom furniture), and hand-me-down or used clothing. They can also be transferred onto your luggage and other items during a stay in a hotel, hostel or any other place where there are bed bugs. In extreme cases they may be on people’s clothing, but this is uncommon. .

Female bed bugs can lay 200–400 eggs year. This means that without control, they can reproduce very quickly. A bed bug reaches maturity in about 5 – 8 weeks. Without control, they can reach a population of hundreds, even thousands, of bed bugs in one unit. Once in a building, bed bugs may spread from one unit to another unit.

It is important to detect bed bug infestations early and to request treatment immediately. Blood spotting on sheets and bites on your body are signs that indicate you may have bed bugs. A bite pattern of two or three bites in a small area is also a sign of bed bugs.

How do I prevent bed bugs from getting into my home?

To reduce the risk of getting bed bugs:

- do not bring in furniture that has been discarded such as mattresses and box spring sets or upholstered furniture.
- carefully inspect used furniture or clothing purchased from second-hand stores or at rummage sales.
- vacuum carpets, bedroom furniture, and any upholstered furniture on a regular basis.
- get rid of any clutter – this will reduce hiding places for bed bugs and allow for proper treatment if needed.

Why is it so hard to get rid of bed bugs?

Bed bugs can hide almost anywhere in a home. Since bed bugs feed on people, baits do not work to control them.

Bed bug eggs are not affected by the insecticides used to treat for bed bugs. If the infestation is small, then the emerging small bed bugs will die from the insecticide, but a second treatment is needed as it can take two weeks for the eggs to hatch.

It is important that all potential areas where the insects may hide are treated so that the insecticide will be present to kill all the bed bugs and the newly hatched baby bed bugs (called nymphs).

What is the treatment for bed bugs, and how is it applied?

Treatment consists of a spray application of an insecticide registered for this use, as well as vacuuming of visible bed bugs on the bed and upholstered furniture. Insecticide dusts may also be used. Sometimes steam treatment is also used. You can also use steam treatment yourself to treat upholstered furniture. Consider borrowing or renting a steam units, and follow the instructions for use.

Will my entire unit be treated or only areas where bed bugs have been found?

Most areas of the home need to be treated, but the kitchen area is not usually treated.

BEFORE TREATMENT

In order to effectively treat your unit, and prevent bed bugs from coming back, follow the instructions below on how to properly prepare your unit. Use this checklist to make sure you look in all the possible bed bug hiding places. If you cannot prepare for treatment due to health or other reasons, let your superintendent know.

- Wash** all clothing, towels, comforters and bed linens (such as sheets, pillow cases) and put them in the dryer at a medium or hot setting for at least 20 minutes. The heat will kill adult bed bugs and eggs. Put clothes, towels, etc. into new garbage bags before taking them home.
- Bag** any clothes, linens and other fabric items that are not used or laundered on a daily basis. Put these items in a tightly-tied, doubled garbage bag for at least three weeks. Do not keep the bag in the bedroom.
- Bag** clothes and other items that can only be dry-cleaned (items that cannot be put in a washing machine or dryer). Put these items in a tightly-tied, doubled garbage bag. You may wish to use mothballs/flakes for a minimum of 3-5 days – this will kill any clothing pests. This will also kill bed bugs. Do not keep the bag in the bedroom.
- Vacuum** your unit thoroughly. This includes:
 - mattresses
 - box springs
 - bed frames
 - the perimeter (border) around each room (including baseboards)
 - behind any furniture
 - bookcases and other shelving units
 - rugs and carpets
 - upholstered furniture such as sofas or chairs (including seams of cushions, areas where cushions sit, underneath the sofas/chairs)
 - the insides of drawers and cabinets, and underneath if you can
 - curtains and blinds

Immediately after you finish vacuuming, throw the disposable vacuum bag or contents of the bag (if your vacuum cleaner does not use a disposable bag) into a double plastic bag, tie it tightly, and put it directly into the garbage bin. For vacuum cleaners that use filters, it is suggested that you rinse the filter in hot water. However, check your owners' manual and instructions first.

- Check** other areas such as:
 - behind pictures hanging on a wall. If you find bed bugs, place the picture(s) on the floor, with the back facing out. This way, the pest control operator can see that there were bed bugs on the picture.
 - books, magazines and other papers. If you find bed bugs, put the items in a tightly-tied, doubled bag for at least three weeks. Do not keep the bag in the bedroom.

- Move:**
 - all furniture and other items in the bedrooms, living room and hallways at least 12 to 18 inches away from the walls.
 - all drawers from dressers and night tables, and place them on top or on the floor, away from the walls.
 - all items from shelves and closets.
 - any items that you have stored under the bed.

ON THE DAY OF TREATMENT

For your safety, please follow the instructions below on the day the unit is being treated.

- Before the day of your treatment, you should have received 24 hours notice of entry into your unit. The notice should inform you of the date and approximate time the pest control operator will arrive.
- Make sure that the pest control operator can enter your unit.
- Make sure you followed the instructions for “Before Treatment”. This will make it easier for the pest control operator to apply the treatment, and to ensure that the treatment is effective and prevents bed bugs from coming back.
- Vacate your unit when the treatment is being done.
- Treatment will take approximately ½ - 1 hour. Stay out of your unit for 3-4 hours following treatment. The treatment product does not have a strong odour, but some people may be at risk of an allergic or asthmatic reaction. Pregnant women and children (especially newborns and children under the age of one) and others who may be sensitive to the product may choose to stay out of the home overnight.

AFTER TREATMENT

The treatment may take 3-7 days before it achieves maximum effectiveness. It is important that you follow the instructions below, after your unit has been treated.

- Do not vacuum around the wall perimeters and baseboards for at least one week after treatment.
- Look for the signs of bed bugs.
- Put your mattress and/or box spring into a mattress enclosure or bag to protect them. This makes it harder for bed bugs to hide on the seams of mattress and/or box spring. It also traps any newly hatched nymphs from eggs that are very hard to find and to treat.
- The use of bed leg protectors is recommended and is a good detection device. If you still see adult bed bugs a few days after treatment a second treatment is needed as soon as possible. In this case, three treatments will be needed.

Two treatments are generally needed to get rid of bed bugs as the treatment does not kill eggs. A second treatment is recommended about two weeks after the first when all remaining eggs have hatched.

Do share this information with your neighbours and encourage them to be aware and to ask for treatment if they need it.