

Sleep Tight.....Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite

The old saying from our childhood never had much meaning because we really didn't know what a "bed bug" was. Not any more. News stories abound about the re-emergence of this pest after many decades.

What is a bed bug?

Bed bugs aren't exclusive to the bed, the mattress or the linens, but as their name suggests: its where they are most comfortable... and the most irritable. The *Cimex lectularius* (the notorious 'bed bug') is an insect. Bed bugs feed on the blood of warm-blooded animals. Where better to find and feed than the place where we spend the most inactive time? Surely they're annoying, but not stupid, as they've adapted to the human environment.



Are bed bugs dangerous?

The bed bug is one of a few insects that are known to NOT carry diseases. They do bite however, leaving a welt that can cause itching and irritation.



How do you get bed bugs in the home, school business, hotel?

Bed bugs will find a way into any facility in any number of ways. Like any infestation, they most commonly hitchhike on your bags and luggage, clothing or other personal effects after you've been previously exposed. Perhaps it was a hotel, public transportation, a conference room, recently-moved storage boxes... you get the picture. As flightless insects, they need you or another animal to move them around.



How do you know if you have bed bugs?

Bed bugs are tiny, shy creatures that only come out at night when you are sleeping, so they can be difficult to detect. However, evidence of a bedbug infestation may be found in bedding and on mattresses. People sometimes roll onto bedbugs while they sleep, resulting in bloodstains upon the sheets. Live bedbugs leave clusters of dark brown or black spots of dried excrement on infested surfaces. Bedbugs also exude a subtle, sweet, musty odor.



Bed bugs can be found in bed sheets, box springs, walls, clothing and luggage. They prefer tight crevices and dark locations where they can remain hidden and protected. Mattresses and other furniture may also host these parasitic insects.

What Cleaning Strategies Can Help Prevent a Bed Bug Infestation?

Wash and Launder. The bedding, sheets and other linens need to be treated and cared for appropriately. Launder the bedding in hot water and dry on a high heat setting. Place pillows and other non-washable items in the dryer for 20 minutes on high heat.

Vacuum Often. Eliminate bed bugs on carpets, drapes and upholstered furniture by vacuuming frequently while emptying the bags between room to room visits.

Clean regularly. You can create an inhospitable environment for these pests if you don't give them the chance to create a home, so sweep up, mop and dust in all of your high traffic areas. Cleanliness is the key to prevention.

If Bed Bugs are discovered, what should be done?

Bed bugs are a problem. Now, the whole country knows how big a problem these small parasitic insects are. Nobody knows this problem more than the hospitality industry.

To Kill Bed Bugs, you FIRST need to find where they hide. So, back to our first point:

Cleanliness is key.

Clean, then search, then remove, then apply any number of bed bug killing solutions available and approved by a pest control company. Pest control professionals treat using a variety of sprays, dusts and aerosols. (Baits designed to kill ants and cockroaches are ineffective). These sprays are secondary to a thorough room cleaning process, so be sure you've got the tools and chemicals to clean up the bed bug problem.



NOTE: Disinfectants do NOT kill bed bugs. Typical disinfectants are designed for killing microscopic pathogens. Bed Bugs are insects.

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Vacuum: Be particularly thorough in typical bed bug hiding places. Look in dark corners, in cracks and crevices, around headboards and between mattress and boxsprings of beds. Always change the bag and seal the used bag tightly in a plastic trash bag.

Hot Water Extract Carpet: Clean Carpets using a hot water extractor and a quality extraction detergent.

Inspect: Luggage, clothing, and other transport items that may have served as a ride for bed bugs.



If you're a hotelier, here are a few tips to combat bed bugs:

- 1) Bulk up on cleaning. With the heightened awareness and sensitivity to the topic, it won't hurt to go over the top to make sure the entirety your property looks as clean as it can be. Your guests' perception of cleanliness can be brutal, so floors and lobbies - in addition to the in-room experience - must be spotless.
- 2) Keep your guests informed. Let them know you're looking out for their best interest, but caution them on the things they can do to prevent bed bug outbreaks.
- 3) Respect the housekeeping staff. Provide them with the cleaning supplies, the cleaning procedures and the resources to do their job to prevent bed bugs.

*It's not always the hotel to blame, it's the in-bound guests that can most easily bring in the bed bug trouble.

If you're a traveler:

- 1) Check for bed bugs before unpacking. Change rooms or hotels if you see evidence, but be sure to inform your hotel or their building services department.
- 2) Check your baggage and use the suitcase holder provided for you. Or, put your belongings in the bath tub until you feel the room is clean.