



How to Prevent Bed Bug Infestations

Prevent Infestations

How do bed bugs move around?

Bed bugs can only crawl. They will crawl from room to room or from suite to suite in multi-family buildings, by travelling along pipes, or crawling into and out of spaces in walls. To go long distances (like from building to building) bed bugs need help from people.

New infestations start when a person moves items such as furniture, clothing, backpacks, handbags, linens, decorative items, books, cardboard boxes, and any other item where a bed bug could be hiding to a new place. The person usually doesn't know that there are bed bugs in the item or items.

How do I prevent bed bugs from infesting my home?

Taking precautions to prevent bed bugs entering your home and becoming established is your best defense. See the topics at the end of this page for more information.

- Don't pick up discarded items from the street or back lane. It may have been left there because it was infested with bed bugs.
- If you spend any time in a place that might be infested with bed bugs, take precautions when you come home.
- Inspect your home regularly for bed bugs. This can be as simple as inspecting your bed every time you change your sheets.
- In multi-family buildings, talk to your landlord or property manager about what they do to prevent bed bug infestations (their protocol). They should know about bed bugs and be willing to talk to you about them. It is possible to do things during a renovation to slow down or stop bed bugs from spreading suite to suite.
- Encase your mattresses and box springs. This will remove many of the hiding places on your bed and make sure that your mattress doesn't become infested and have to be thrown away. Having encasement on your mattress makes it much easier to inspect regularly.

Encasement is the term used to describe enclosing your mattress in a bed bug proof cover. It's usually a 6-sided cover with a zip. You can buy them at department stores, mattress stores and from some Pest Control Operators. The package should say "bed bug proof". You can wrap a mattress in heavy plastic and seal all the seams with something like duct tape; however, the plastic could get a hole in it.

- Inspect your room when travelling, and take precautions when you get home just in case.

Shopping for Second-Hand Goods

What to Look for When Shopping

- Bed bug droppings are reddish-black to black. They look like small dots or large smears. It can look like a dot from a felt pen that has run a little around the edges.
- The skin they shed is a light tan—it looks like a dead bed bug.
- Use a flashlight, as bed bugs move quickly to get away from the light.
- Carefully look at all the surfaces of furniture including the inside and outside surfaces, the sides of drawers, joints, screw holes, backs of bookcases and any other place that could hide a bed bug. If a credit card can fit into the space, a bed bug can hide in it.
- Upholstered furniture that is in good condition (no tears or holes) will have fewer places for bed bugs to hide.
- Look at all household goods including items like stuffed animals, books, or DVDs.
- When buying clothing, carefully inspect the seams and hems.

Bringing Your Items Home

- Bring plastic bags that you can seal the item in before you take it home.
- When you get home, put any items that can withstand heat in the dryer for 30 minutes on high heat (it is okay to wash it first), or keep the item in the sealed bag until you do your laundry. The heat of the dryer will kill the bed bugs and their eggs.
- If bringing home a larger item that can't be laundered (like furniture), keep it isolated, preferably outside your home until it can be cleaned thoroughly. A detached garage or shed is a good place for larger items. If possible, leave the furniture outside until it can be cleaned and inspected a second time.

Cleaning Your Items to Remove or Kill Bed Bugs

- For soft furniture including mattresses, couches, chairs etc., vacuum all cushions/pillows, the top and bottom surfaces, and all crevices using a vacuum cleaner crevice tool.
- For hard furniture like dressers, TV stands, bookshelves etc., wipe the inside, outside, top, and bottom with soap and water. Pay extra attention to all cracks and crevices. Seal all the joints with silicone or other sealant.
- Throw away the contents of your vacuum cleaner outside of your home.
- If you think you have or may have a bed bug infestation, don't give away or donate any items. Throw the item in the garbage. If possible, destroy it so it is not likely to be taken away by someone going through your garbage.

To learn more, call your nearest Environmental Health office:

- Calgary: (403) 943-2295
- Edmonton: (780) 735-1800
- Grande Prairie: (780) 513-7517
- Lethbridge: (403) 388-6689
- Red Deer: (403) 356-6366

This content may be updated without notice.

Last Revised: February 25, 2015

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