



How Do I Treat a Bed Bug Infestation?

Treatment

A bed bug infestation is not simple to deal with. You have to do several things at the same time:

1. Have the area treated by a pest control operator (PCO).
2. De-clutter: This means throwing away everything you don't need any more. Don't throw away your furniture until you talk with the PCO. The PCO will tell you what items can and can't be treated.
3. Clean: Use a vacuum cleaner and the crevice tool of the vacuum cleaner to vacuum all the possible places bed bugs hide.
4. Wash: Wash off any signs of bed bugs as best you can. This will make it easier to see new signs of bed bugs on your next inspection.
5. Laundry: The heat of a hot dryer will kill all stages of bed bugs.
6. Isolate: Once items have no more bed bugs, keep them away from any bed bugs you know are still in your home.
7. Treat your sleeping place:
 - Remove bed bugs from your bed.
 - Remove the bed skirt to prevent bed bugs from using it to climb.
 - Vacuum all areas of your bed. This includes all surfaces of the mattress and box springs, the bed frame including the underside, the headboard, and the back of the headboard.
 - Kill any bed bugs hiding in the sheets, blankets, bed spread, and pillows by washing them and treating with heat in a hot dryer for 30 minutes. Don't over-fill the dryer or your things won't get hot enough.
 - Protect your bed.
 - Encase the mattress and box spring. This means that you use a special cover that has six sides and is closed with a zipper. It should say "bed bug proof" on the outside of the package. Once you have covered your mattress, don't open it for at least 1 year. You can also use the cover as a mattress cover and leave it on. Bed bugs can't chew holes in things so once this bed bug proof cover is in place any bed bugs that are trapped on the inside will die and no new bed bugs can get in. These covers don't have seams or piping on the outside so there is no places on the outside for bed bugs to hide.

- Interceptors for Your Bed
 - An interceptor is a low dish-like thing made out of heavy, smooth, shiny plastic. It has a well in the centre where the leg of the bed goes and a moat around the well. These trap any bed bugs that manage to crawl up the outside edge of the interceptor.
 - Interceptors take advantage of the fact that bed bugs don't like crawling on smooth, shiny surfaces or on sticky ones.
 - You can buy them from pest control companies.
 - Home-made interceptors can be made by:
 - wrapping double sided sticky tape around the legs of the bed
 - covering the legs of the bed with petroleum jelly
 - placing smooth-sided containers (e.g., margarine dish, glass jar) under the legs of the bed with something in the bottom to trap bed bugs (vegetable oil, talcum powder, or a layer of petroleum jelly should all work)
 - Don't put anything toxic in the bottom of the well. Insecticidal dusts work well to kill bed bugs but may cause breathing problems especially if you are exposed for a long time.
- Isolate Your Bed
 - Keep your bed at least 15 cm (6 inches) away from the walls.
 - Don't store anything on your bed.
- Keep Protecting Your Bed
 - Don't put anything on your bed. Bags, coats, or any other item that just may have a hidden bed bug on it shouldn't be put on your bed.
 - Heat treat all bedding at least once a week until all the bed bugs are gone.
 - Inspect your bed at least once a week for any new signs of bed bugs. Vacuum the bed and bed frame at least once a week.

You will need to clean and inspect at least once a week until you are sure the bed bugs are gone. This may take weeks, depending on how bad the infestation was, and, in a multi-family building, on how well everyone co-operates.

What are some chemical control measures?

Chemical treatment is best done by a PCO. The PCO should give you written information that tells you what time the treatment will be, what chemicals will be used, how long you will need to be out of your home, and what you need to do ahead of time to prepare. It should tell you what cleaning you should do afterwards, as well. Ask your landlord if you aren't given information.

There should be information for precautions for people who are sensitive to the smell of chemicals. It is a good idea to check with your doctor if you are concerned about people in your home that are in poor health or who are especially sensitive such as infants, seniors, or those with weak immune systems.

Home owners who want to do the chemical treatment themselves should know that using the pesticides incorrectly can make them sick. Use all chemicals properly. This means that you should follow the directions on the label and ask questions if you don't understand the instructions.

Not using insecticides properly may only cause the bed bugs to move to get away from the insecticide. They may move to new areas to escape the pesticides. Some chemicals that are licensed for use against bed bugs are only available to a licensed PCO.

Using pesticides in dwellings in Alberta is controlled by Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and regulations. Pesticides in Canada are licensed for use by Health Canada.

Heat Treatment

Heat treatment is a specialized process. You have to have special equipment and know how to heat rooms with bed bugs to a high enough temperature. If the room doesn't get hot enough, the bed bugs may move to a new, cooler area. Heat treatment does not take the place of de-cluttering, cleaning, and ongoing monitoring.

Bed Bug Dogs

There are several dogs in Alberta that are trained to inspect for bed bugs. There are things you will be asked to do before the dog arrives. The dogs can find bed bugs faster than a trained professional. The dog and its handler work as a team to detect bed bugs. The dog should be trained and certified.

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.

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