

# **Guidelines for Prevention and Management of Bed Bugs in Shelters and Group Living Facilities**

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# Preventing a Bed Bug Infestation

## Furniture and Room Guidelines

Bed bugs thrive under certain conditions which are enhanced by the availability of hiding spots close to their human hosts. Bed bugs have a strong preference for paper and wood, over metal and plastic. Porous surfaces provide more humidity and egg-laying locations. Furniture choices can greatly contribute to the control of bed bugs.

Guidelines for furniture include:

- Replace wood frame beds with metal frame beds to discourage bed bug hiding and egg-laying on beds.
- Eliminate head boards completely. Bed bugs hide and thrive in head boards.
- Replace all plush furniture with metal and plastic, or items easily cleaned with soap and water.
- Adding smaller cushions that can be placed in a dryer is one way to make residents more comfortable. Cushions should be dried on a hot setting if bed bugs are an issue. Use only white or light colored sheets.
- Use wooden baby cribs, but choose models that are painted white. Paint existing wood-colored cribs white. Fill gaps in the frames with silicone caulk. This will allow for much better inspection and reduce need for treatment. Avoid using pesticides on baby cribs!
- Vinyl-covered or seamless mattresses are recommended for adult beds and cribs.
- If vinyl mattresses have holes, consider repairing them with tape or discarding them.
- Do not discard regular (non-vinyl) mattresses, only to replace them with other regular mattresses. Bed bugs will reinfest the new bedding quickly. Use mattress encasements (see below).
- If a box spring is being used, be sure to encase it too. The box spring is more likely to harbor bed bugs than the mattress.
- Wooden dressers, wardrobes, tables and other furniture can be painted white for easy inspection. Any crevices where a credit card will fit should first be sealed with silicone caulk to eliminate hiding spots.



A metal bed frame and vinyl mattress will minimize bed bug problems.  
Photo by Black Widow Pest Control.

## Mattress Encasements

Mattress encasements are an excellent way to control bed bugs. They are available in both vinyl and cloth. Vinyl encasements are seamless and prevent bed bugs from entering or leaving the mattress. Cloth encasements are made of a tight weave that prevents bed bugs from passing through the fabric. Both types of encasements should be used on all mattresses and box springs in an infested home. Encasements should be left on for at least one year to ensure that all bed bugs and eggs have died.