



Steamers and vacuums are often used to help eliminate infestations.

While some preparation is still necessary, the amount of de-cluttering required with heat treatment is often less than with other approaches. Some heat-sensitive items such as aerosol cans, indoor plants, and medications will need to be removed, although televisions, computers, and other electronics usually do not. It's also unnecessary to launder bedding and clothing since these items will be heated along with other belongings. Another advantage of heat treatment is that infestations can often be eliminated in one day, rather than over multiple days or weeks. Conversely, heat treatment alone has no lasting (residual) effect should bed bugs be reintroduced into the dwelling. Consequently, some firms concurrently apply insecticides. To further minimize reintroduction, occupants are advised to take as few belongings as possible with them while the heat up is performed. Heat treatments require special expertise and equipment, and may be more costly than conventional methods relying primarily on insecticides.

**PREVENTING INFESTATIONS.** With all the effort and expense to eradicate bed bugs, it's prudent to take precautions against contacting them in the first place. Avoid bringing discarded mattresses and sofas into the home, and closely examine any secondhand items for fecal spots and other telltale signs of bed bugs. There is no reason to stop shopping in consignment stores, yard sales, etc., but it's wise to run clothing and fabrics through the washer or dryer before storing them in the home. The risk of picking up bed bugs from antique shops is

insignificant.

Avoiding bed bugs is especially challenging in hotels, apartments, and other places where there are many people and opportunities for introduction. Pro-active surveillance by tenants, housekeepers, maintenance, or pest managers is the best way to detect infestations in their initial stages when they are easiest to control. The longer bed bugs go undetected, the more likely they are to disperse to other locations besides sleeping and resting sites. In multi-occupancy buildings such as hotels and apartments, neglected infestations are also more likely to spread to other units. Since bed bugs are cryptic and nocturnal, visual inspection alone sometimes fails to reveal their presence. Various devices are available to help monitor for bed bugs that may have been missed. Most popular are small plastic dishes that wandering bed bugs crawl or fall into but cannot escape due to the slippery inner surface. Some of these pitfall traps have no attractant, while others emit carbon dioxide or a chemical scent. Typically the devices are placed under the legs of beds and seating, or close by. Periodic checking by occupants, staff, or pest controllers often can help to reveal bed bugs in the crucial early stages of infestation.



Discarded beds and sofas are likely sources of bed bugs and should not be brought into homes.

**SPECIFIC TIPS FOR AT-RISK GROUPS**  
*Business & Leisure Travelers.* Checking your bed for bed bugs was a common practice years ago, especially when traveling. Today's traveler should consider doing the same, preferably before unpacking. This would entail examining the bed sheets and seams of mattress and box spring for signs of bed bugs, especially along the head (pillow end) of the bed. Some experts also make it a habit of removing and checking behind headboards since this is a frequent hiding place for the bugs in hotel rooms. Headboards are heavy and cumbersome, though, and untrained persons should not attempt removal themselves. Vigilant travelers may also want to elevate luggage off the floor on a stand, table, or other hard surface rather than stowing it on the floor or another bed. Unpacking what's necessary and retaining the rest in a zipped up suitcase might be prudent. Cautious individuals may even want to keep belongings in sealed plastic pouches or totes — each traveler must decide how vigilant they wish to be.

The majority of bed bug infestations in hotels are limited, oftentimes to just a few rooms. If bugs are discovered, guests can request another room, preferably in a different area of the hotel since infestations sometimes extend to nearby units. Should you experience itchy welts suggestive of bites during your stay, it would be prudent upon returning home to place all clothing directly into the washer/dryer. Inspecting or vacuuming suitcases is less useful since it's difficult to spot bed bugs in luggage. Suitcases in question can either be heat treated (a hot car can often do the trick in summer) or discarded.

*Social Service & Emergency Workers.* Caregivers, firefighters, and other service providers are sometimes required to enter and assist in bed bug-infested dwellings. In doing so, there is the potential to transport the pests home or to the workplace. As noted earlier, bed bugs do not fly, or jump onto people and pets as fleas do. During the day, the bugs usually remain hid-

den, becoming more active at night when seeking a host. Consequently, the chance of picking up bed bugs by simply walking into an infested dwelling during the day is unlikely. The risk may increase while providing care but can be lessened by taking a few precautions.

Bring in only what is needed, and avoid sitting or placing coats and other items on beds, sofas and floors where the bugs often reside. Essential items can be placed on a table or other hard surface, preferably away from bedrooms and sleeping areas. It's better to sit on a hard, non-upholstered chair than on sofas and recliners. Also try to avoid leaning or brushing against beds and furniture. If such items are carried out of infested dwellings (e.g., by sanitation workers), it's best to wrap them in plastic or at least not hold them against your body during transport. Emergency medical personnel may need to take additional precautions, such as removing/bagging a patient's infested shoes or clothing, or installing plastic sheeting inside the emergency vehicle.

Although applying insect repellent at night is not an effective way to deter bed bugs, there may be some benefit to spraying tops/bottoms of shoes with DEET-based repellents when working in severely infested dwellings. Those working in such environments may want to hot wash or run their clothing/shoes through a dryer upon returning home or to the office.

*Schools & Day Cares.* Bed bugs are a growing problem in schools and day cares. Typically the bugs are introduced by students or staff with an infestation at home. Pinpointing where bed bugs might be located in a school setting can be challenging, as there are no permanent sleeping

#### For More Information . . .

Pest management professionals are encouraged to use this brochure as a hand-out to customers who have questions about treating for bed bugs. For additional quantities, contact PCT magazine at 800/456-0707.