



Heat treatments are an effective way to eliminate bed bugs, but require specialized equipment and expertise.

hospital personnel. All employees should know what procedures to follow when they see or receive word of a possible bed bug incident. It helps to have an on-site coordinator to respond to incidents, including interviewing persons suspected of bringing in bugs and confirming that they are indeed bed bugs. Temporary isolation and containment of such people and their infested belongings is crucial to stemming building-wide occurrences. Some patient care facilities use clear plastic zip-lock bags or other tight-fitting containers to store personal belongings in examination or patient rooms.

If bugs are found in an examination, patient or waiting room, the room should be thoroughly inspected. While bed bug insecticides are not particularly hazardous, they should be used sparingly in health care settings. Spot-killing of bed bugs on beds, sleep chairs, furniture or flooring often can be accomplished with disinfectants used for terminal cleaning. Vacuums and steamers also can be deployed against small numbers of bed bugs found in accessible locations. Infested beds and furniture should ideally be treated with heat in a designated area of the hospital. Care should be taken not to dislodge bed bugs during transit and it is often wise to wrap the items in plastic. Periodic, proactive inspection of waiting rooms, lounges, sleep-study/dialysis clinics, etc. is advisable by in-house staff and the pest control contractor. Frequency of inspection should depend on the history of prior incidents and risk of future infestation. If there is reason to believe incommensurate patients, family members or visitors are harboring bed bugs, instructions may be given to remove belongings from the building and take them home to be laundered.

**Office Buildings.** Bed bugs also can be transported into the workplace. As with schools and health care, infestations in offices tend to be limited in scope and often confined to workstations and seating. While it often cannot be determined how they were brought in, if bed bugs

**Healthcare Facilities.** Bed bugs are becoming increasingly common in patient care facilities. The key to effective management is early detection and containment. This requires education and involvement of all staff including administration. The role of the pest control provider is important also, but no more so than that of

are found on an employee's clothing, office chair, etc., they should be tactfully counseled that they may be transporting them into the workplace from home. Some employers help coordinate inspection of residences with their own pest control provider to lessen the chance of further introduction.

'Introductions' versus 'infestations' of bed bugs should trigger different actions. Small numbers spotted in schools, hospitals offices, stores, libraries, etc. (typical of a recent 'introduction') necessitate action — but usually do not warrant closure or cessation of operations. In offices and such where there are no beds or recurrent sleeping hosts, introductions of a few bed bugs are less likely to multiply and result in the type of infestations observed in homes and apartments. While it's common to overreact in these situations, resources are better spent educating workers and following established protocols.

**Unable to Hire a Professional?** Bed bug eradication is difficult. When resources allow it is prudent to hire a professional. However treatment can be expensive, often costing hundreds or thousands of dollars. Those who cannot afford this may need to tackle the problem themselves. One step individuals can take to combat bed bugs is to install bed encasements. Encasing the mattress and box spring can help to eliminate a substantial portion of the population — particularly if the bugs are discovered early when most tend to congregate in the bed area. Care should be taken not to tear the encasement, especially during installation over metal bed frames. Ideally both mattress and box spring should be encased. If only one encasement is affordable, it's often best to cover the box, which is harder to subsequently inspect. As noted earlier, bug-proof encasements also are available for sofas and love seats.

With persistence and a bright flashlight, householders can become adept at finding and destroying bed bugs. The process is made

easier by reducing clutter, especially in sleeping areas. Any bugs that are spotted can be eliminated with a vacuum, wad of duct tape, or over-the-counter insecticide approved for such use. Dish- or dome-shaped pitfall traps (such as ClimbUp Insect Interceptors, BlackOut Bed Bug Detector, SenSci Volcano, etc.), can help reveal presence of bugs in the important early stages of infestation. Installing a trap under each bed leg also creates a barrier between bed and floor that can help reduce bites. To deter bed bugs from bypassing the traps, pull the (encased) bed a few inches away from walls and don't allow dust ruffles or blankets to form a bridge to the floor — thus making the sleep surface a bug-free 'island.'

Most bed bug sprays intended for householders have little effect after the spray has dried. Consequently it is important to contact as many of the bugs as possible with the spray itself. Directions should be read carefully as some products should not be used on beds and seating. Insecticides formulated as dusts or powders are messy, and difficult for the layperson to apply correctly. One such powder (diatomaceous earth), touted as a do-it-yourself bed bug solution, will typically do little to eliminate an infestation. Total release foggers ('bug bombs') also are ineffective and are potentially dangerous when used incorrectly.

The incidence of bed bugs in the United States and throughout the world has increased to the point where vigilance is prudent. Familiarity can help to avoid infestation, or at least prompt timely intervention by a professional. 🌟

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Dish-shaped traps can be placed under beds and sofas to help monitor for bed bugs. Bugs that crawl in cannot escape.