

Bed Bug Quick Relief Guide for Tenants and Homeowners

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What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are insects that feed on blood. Adult bed bugs are oval, flat, reddish brown bugs about the size of an apple seed or smaller. They hide during the day and look for people to bite at night. Bed bug bites are itchy red welts that look similar to mosquito bites. People carry bed bugs into their homes in infested luggage, clothing, used furniture, or bedding.

What you should do if you suspect that you have bed bugs:

Itchy bites that appear at night are only one sign that your home is infested with bed bugs, but about 30 percent of people who are bitten by bed bugs do not develop the itchy welts.

Inspect your bedroom for evidence of bed bugs:

- Carefully remove your blankets, sheets, comforters, pillows cases and mattress pad. Fold them in towards the middle of the bed and place everything into a sealable garbage bag. (If the bugs are in the bed, tearing the bed clothes off of the bed and throwing them on the floor will scatter the bugs.) Tie the bag closed, and don't reuse the bed linens until they have been washed in hot water and dried in a drier on the highest heat setting for 30 minutes.
- Inspect the mattress and springs with a flashlight. Look for live bugs, and brownish or black spots, which is bed bug manure. Look especially closely around seams, in the quilting on the mattress, inside the frame of the box springs, on the bed frame and behind the headboard. If you see any evidence of bed bugs on the bed, check the baseboards, behind electrical outlet plates, cracks in the walls, loose wallpaper, and the edge of the carpeting. Also, look on the underside of furniture, on the bottom of dresser drawers, and even the pictures on the walls!

Prepare the infected room once bed bugs are confirmed:

1) Bag/clean items

- Place all of your clothing from the infected room in plastic bags that can be sealed, or in plastic containers with tight lids. The clothing may contain bed bugs and eggs, and it must be washed in hot water and dried at the highest dryer setting for at least 30 minutes to kill bedbugs. Once the clothing is clean, store it in sealed bags or plastic containers until the bed bug problem is eliminated.
- All bedding should be handled in the same manner as your clothing and should be changed two or three times a week, since bed bugs may lay their eggs on them.
- Wool items, plush toys, shoes and other non washable items can be place in a hot dryer for 30 minutes.

2) Vacuum the floor, mattress and baseboards

Use a vacuum cleaner with a brush attachment to clean your mattress, box spring, and bed frame, paying special attention to mattress seams. Then use the crevice tool on your vacuum cleaner on the bed frame, and baseboards. Next, sprinkle talcum powder or cornstarch onto the floor prior to vacuuming, and finally thoroughly sweep the floor. When you are finished, IMMEDIATELY dump the contents of the dust cup into a plastic bag, or remove the disposable filter bag and take it outside to an outdoor trash can.

3) Cover Your Mattress

Now that you have taken steps to clean the bed, you must immediately cover the mattress with a zippered mattress cover. Since the cover needs to stay on the mattress for a minimum of a year, it is recommended that you use a woven polyester cover labeled as “allergen rated.” These covers are more durable than plastic cover, which often tear allowing bed bugs to escape. The zipper flap on the mattress cover should be covered with a piece of duct tape to close the seam. Bed bugs will live for a year without feeding, so it is important to leave the mattress covers on for at least that long.

Keep bed bugs out – Make Your Bed an Island

- Buy “Climb up Interceptors”. These are special cups available through exterminators and on the internet that act as bed bug traps
- Get your mattress and springs off of the floor! A mattress that is lying on the floor is the perfect hiding place for bed bugs! Put it on a frame that is at least a foot above the floor.
- Pull your bed away from the wall so that your bed or bedding (blanket, sheets, etc) does not touch the wall.
- Remove bed skirts and make sure bedding does not touch the floor.
- Do not place anything (luggage, blankets, pillows, stuffed toys) onto any bed which may have bed bugs. Be particularly careful when returning from a trip.

Clean Up Clutter

It is impossible to get rid of bed bugs without getting rid of clutter.

- Clutter is anything that makes it hard to clean or is a hiding place for bed bugs.
- Pick up, wash and bag up all clothes and other items on your floor.
- Anything that you don't need any more should be thrown away. However, be sure to completely destroy anything that you throw away!

Get Professional Help

- You CANNOT get rid of bed bugs on your own
- You or your landlord will need to hire a licensed exterminator (pest control operator).
- Your landlord is required to take care of pest control if you live in a building with two or more apartments. All apartments directly above, below and next to yours must also be treated.
- If you live in a single family home, you are responsible for pest control.
- The pest control operator will ask you to remove all clutter from your home before they arrive.
- You will also need to remove, wash, and bag up all clothes including clothes stored in dressers.
- They may also ask you to bag other items such as books, toys, or other clutter.
- Anything that is bagged without cleaning should be tightly sealed in a heavy duty garbage bag, or other bag that can be tightly sealed and will not rip.

Keep from getting bit at night:

- Clean your mattress and bed frame
- Cover mattress and box springs in a special cover
- Wash your bed clothes frequently
- Make your bed an Island

Frequently Asked Questions:

What pesticides can I use?

Bed bugs are becoming resistant to common pesticides. Pesticides available in stores for use in homes will mostly only kill bed bugs when they are sprayed directly on the bugs. Also, never apply pesticides on top of mattresses or couches or where children and pets play. We recommend that you leave pesticide applications to a licensed pest control operator. If you decide to use a pesticide, follow label instructions and make sure that the label says it can be used for bed bugs. No over-the-counter pesticides are effective against bed bugs

Are bug bombs or insecticide foggers effective?

No, these products can spread hazardous chemicals throughout your home and are not effective against bed bugs. Bug bombs and foggers actually make the problem worse because they can cause bed bugs to scatter to other areas of the house.

Do I need to throw away my mattresses and furniture?

No, throwing your mattress or furniture away will not solve a bed bug problem. If you have bed bugs in your mattress or couch, they are also living in other places in your house. Any new furniture that you bring into your home will also get bed bugs.

Ask your pest control operator if there is anything you need to throw away. Even if furniture such as a couch has bed bugs, the pest control operator may be able to treat it. If you do need to throw something away, spray paint or write "Bed Bugs" on the item in large letters so that no one picks it up and brings it into their home. Do not get new furniture until the pest control operator has finished treating your home and you are sure that bed bugs are gone.

How can friends and family members avoid bringing bed bugs from my home to theirs?

Bed bugs can travel from one house to another on a person's clothes or in purses, bags, suitcases, or backpacks. Until you have eliminated bed bugs in your home, we recommend that friends and family members take the following steps when visiting your home:

- Do not bring in purses, bags, suitcases or backpacks
- If possible, avoid sitting on soft furniture such as couches
- They should remove, wash and dry their clothes immediately upon returning home. If they do not have their own washer and dryer, bag clothes in a tightly sealed bag until they can be washed and dried.