

BED BUGS

“Good night. Sleep tight. Don’t let the bed bugs bite!” For the past sixty years, at least here in the USA, this was pretty easy to do. There weren’t enough bed bugs around to do much biting. Certain practices, primarily the widespread use of the pesticide DDT, had all but eliminated bed bugs in America and in many countries around the world. That’s not the case today. The global use of DDT has been severely restricted for the past thirty years due to environmental concerns and the bed bug population has made a dramatic comeback. The increase in travel throughout the globe has enabled the bed bugs to re-establish themselves as a world-wide nuisance.

What are bed bugs and why are they a problem?

They’re a small reddish-brown, oval-shaped insect (approx. 5 mm. in length) that live on blood. That’s the problem. Any type of animal blood will do, and humans, with our lack of fur and relatively thin skin, make for an especially easy target. And the little critters are very stealth bloodsuckers. They produce an anticoagulant to keep their victim from bleeding along with a topical anesthetic to keep the victim from even knowing they’re being bitten. Since bed bugs are active at night and hide out during the day, they’re most likely to feed on their prey while the individual is asleep. They won’t travel too far from their prey so that’s why they remain in close proximity to the bed, hence their name.

How do I prevent bed bugs from invading my space?

The old saying that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” certainly applies when it comes to bed bugs. Keep in mind that bed bugs are great little hitchhikers. Some tips to keep them from becoming residents in your residence:

- When traveling, inspect any room (hotels, another residence hall, off-campus apartments etc.) in which you are staying (see below for what to look for).
- After returning from a trip, check your luggage and clothing for any evidence of any insects that might have hitched a ride with you.
- Change your bed linens at least once a week and wash them in **HOT WATER** (at least 97 degrees). Use the **HIGH HEAT** setting on the dryer.
- Never use old bedding which someone else has discarded.
- Thoroughly inspect any used furniture before bringing it in your room or apartment. Since bed bugs like to hide, you’ll need to check inside drawers, the undersides of the furniture, inside bed post and frames, and basically inside every nook and cranny.

So what happens if I'm bitten?

Humans will react to a bed bug bite in one of three ways:

- 1. No reaction.**
- 2. A localized reaction. Little red bump(s) accompanied by itching. The itching can be relieved by an over-the-counter or prescription anti-itch cream.**
- 3. A generalized reaction. This is a systemic allergic reaction and the victim should seek medical attention immediately. Fortunately, this type of reaction is quite rare.**

I think I may have bed bugs in my room or apartment. What should I look for?

Some telltale signs to look for are:

- The actual bed bug.**
- Tiny bloodstains on your sheets, pillowcases, blankets or mattress.**
- Tiny specks of blood on or around wall hangings, posters, wall paper, etc.**
- Tiny specks of brown (insect fecal matter) in and around furniture crevices.**

When in doubt, call 831-1141 and report that you might have a problem with bed bugs. A University of Delaware Pest Control Specialist will be scheduled to inspect your room or apartment.

The inspection revealed the presence of bed bugs in my room or apartment. Now what?

Together, we're going to get rid of them. The Pest Control Specialist will thoroughly treat the area(s) where the bed bugs were found. This involves a crack and crevice treatment of the floors, baseboards, furniture, electrical outlets, bed frame, walls, etc. using an approved pesticide. Your mattress and/or box spring will either be discarded or treated using prescribed procedures. You will be responsible for bagging up and laundering all bed clothes, linens, pillows, etc. in HOT WATER and then running them through the dryer using HIGH HEAT. Any items which cannot be laundered will need to be dry-cleaned. A checklist will be provided to you with specific preparations you'll need to make prior to the treatment. It may be necessary to launder/dry clean all clothing located in the affected area(s). Pest Control will do follow-up inspections to insure that the problem has been remediated and will perform additional treatments as needed.