What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. Adult bed bugs are wingless, appear reddish-brown and have flat oval bodies. They are about the size of an apple seed and hide in cracks in furniture, floors, walls, suitcases or clothing. Newly hatched nymphs look translucent and become brown when they molt. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become brighter red. They can live for several months without feeding on a host.

Signs of bed bugs include:
• Presence of bed bugs
• Empty bed bug skins
• Blood spots or stains on bedding, mattresses, furniture or walls.

How Does a Home Become Infested with Bed Bugs?

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes without realizing it. The bed bugs are in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

How to Get Rid of Bed Bugs?

1. Find out where bed bugs are hiding in the home.

Use a bright flashlight to look for bed bugs or their dark droppings in bedroom furniture. Or use a hot hair dryer, a thin knife, or a playing card to force them out of hiding spaces and cracks. Check:
• Behind headboards.
• In the seams and tufts of mattresses and inside box springs.
• Along bedroom baseboard cracks.
• In and around nightstands.
• Other bedroom items, including window and door casings, pictures, moldings, nearby furniture, loose wallpaper, cracks in plaster and partitions, and clutter.

2. Tell the occupant to clean areas where bed bugs are likely to hide.

• Clean bedding, linens, curtains, rugs, carpets, and clothes. To kill bed bugs, items should be washed in hot water and dried on the highest dryer setting. Delicate cloths should be soaked in warm water with lots of laundry soap for several hours before rinsing. Wool items, plush toys, shoes, and many other items can be placed into a hot dryer for 30 minutes to get rid of bed bugs.
• Mattress seams should be scrubbed with a stiff brush to dislodge bed bugs and their eggs.

• They should vacuum mattresses, bed frames, nearby furniture, floors and carpets. Tell them to pay special attention to cracks and open spaces. Immediately
after vacuuming, put the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag, and dispose of it in an outdoor container.

- If bed bugs are found on a mattress, it should be covered with a waterproof, zippered mattress cover labeled “allergen rated,” or “for dust mites.” The cover should be kept on for at least one year.
- If the box spring is infested, it should be sealed inside a vinyl box spring cover for at least one year. If no cover is available, the box spring should be thrown away.
- Infested items that cannot be cleaned should be disposed of by sealing tightly in a plastic garbage bag and discarded in an outside container.
- They should repair cracks in plaster and repair or remove loose wallpaper.

3. Warn occupants to be very careful about using pesticides.
Pesticides can be hazardous to people and pets. If the occupant chooses to use a pesticide, or a licensed pest control professional suggests using one, these precautions should be followed:
- Only use pesticides clearly labeled for bed bug extermination. Never use a cockroach spray, ant spray, or any other pesticide that does not list bed bugs on the label.
- Follow label instructions exactly.
- Never spray pesticides on top of mattresses or sofas, or in areas where children or pets are present.

- Never purchase or use a product without a manufacturer’s label and never buy pesticides from street vendors.
- Avoid using “insecticide bombs” and “foggers” in your home. These products can spread hazardous chemicals throughout your home, and are not likely to be effective against bed bugs.

How Can Occupants Keep Bed Bugs from Getting Into Homes?
- Wash clothing and inspect luggage immediately after returning from a trip.
- Inspect used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into the home.
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into the home.

How to Keep Furniture from Infesting Someone Else’s Home?
- Infested furniture or clothing should never be resold or donated.
- If infested furniture is thrown away, make it is undesirable to others by cutting or poking holes in its upholstery or making it unusable. Tape a sign to it that says, “Infested with Bed Bugs.”

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