DON'T GET BITTEN:
A GUIDE TO PREVENTING
AND CONTROLLING BED BUGS

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Good night Mom!
Good night, sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite!

Good night Mom!

See you tomorrow!
Max's eyes are wide with fear as he thinks about bed bugs.
Mom!!! Help me!!! Mom! Awwwkkkk!!!
What Does a Bed Bug Look Like?

Bed bugs are flat, oval-shaped and small; adult bed bugs are about 1/4 inch in length, or about the size of a ladybug or an apple seed. Baby bed bugs are significantly smaller, about the size of a pinhead. They are usually reddish-brown in color, especially after they’ve been feeding. They have six legs, visible antennae and cone-like eyes.
I wasn’t going to eat you, kid. I was just going to bite.

Not so fast. You’re not going anywhere!
Where did you come from? How long have you been here? And how did you get in?
We have ways to make you talk!

Okay, okay, fine! What do you want to know?
Why are you here in Melvin's room?
This is a great pad for a bed bug. Melvin is a messy guy and we like that. We’re not picky – as long as there are people for us to munch on, we’ll move into any house. No matter if it’s clean or dirty, in the city or out in the woods. But once we’re here, it’s easier for us to hang around in a messy room. Clutter gives us more places to hide.
“Us?” There’s more than one of you?

It’ll help but it’s not enough to make us go away.

“Us?” There’s more than one of you?

Didn’t I tell you to clean this up?

I’ll clean it up, I promise! Will you go away then?
Bed bugs like to hang together. We live for about 10 months and our lady bed bugs have about 400 kids during their lifetime. If you see one of us, you can bet there’s a whole bunch more.

Where do you all live?

Right here in Melvin’s room. We stick close to people since we live on human blood.
What do I do now?
How do I get my room back?

You know that expression, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure?” Well, those words were invented because of bed bugs. It would have been so much easier if you had never let us in in the first place.
Allright, allright, don’t freak out on me.

C’mon kid, I’m a sucker for tears. Look, it’ll be okay, there are ways to get rid of us.
Where do we start?

You need a pro to help you. You’re gonna have to hire a certified, licensed bug guy who has experience with bed bugs. You try to do it yourself and you could make the problem worse. We’ll just take off and spread all over your house.

How???

Start by cleaning up this mess, kid.

Where do we start?
I’m Ted, the Bed Bug Guy. I’m here to help!

I’m so glad you’re here! Come this way.

THE NEXT DAY
Before I do anything, I want to make sure you really have bed bugs.

Look at Melvin’s arm. He got bit.
Signs of a Bed Bug Infestation

Bites alone do not prove that you have a bed bug infestation – the only way to tell for sure is to find and identify the bugs, since bites from ticks, fleas and mosquitoes, as well as allergic reactions, can all resemble bed bug bites.

Bed bug bites occur in clusters or rows, and typically bed bugs feed at night. If you or someone in your family wakes up with bites, look for these other warning signs of bed bugs:

1. Small blood stains on your bed sheets and clothes.
2. Tiny dark brown spots on the sheets and the underside of the mattress and the box springs.
3. A sweet or musty smell in the room.
4. Dead bed bugs or their shed skins on the bed or in their hiding places.
Yep, those look like a bed bug bites, but that doesn’t prove anything. Bed bug bites look like a lot of other bites. The only way to be sure you got bed bugs is to find them.

We already found them. We talked to one last night.

Uh, right, kid. So...
I’m going to start by checking their usual digs.
Eureka! Here we have some bed bugs just the way we like them — dead.

And see these brown spots? This is their, uh, fecal excrement.
Hey, everybody poops, kid. So now we got a positive ID – we know for sure they’re here. This probably means there are a bunch more bugs hiding in this room.
Bed bugs are so tiny they can hide just about anywhere. They hide in cracks in the floor, in the headboard and bedposts, in picture frames and clothes, in books, magazines and toys.
You've got some bed bugs hiding right here in this book, see? The thing to do with small items like books and toys is to seal them in plastic bags and freeze the whole thing for 3 nights and days. Freezing kills bed bugs but it takes a little time.
I don’t think I want that car anymore. Can’t I just throw it away?

Not unless you want to share bed bugs with your neighbors.
Tips for Preventing Bed Bugs in your Home

Prevention is the best medicine when it comes to a problem like bed bugs, and there are many steps you can take to make sure you don’t bring bed bugs to your home.

- Change your bedding every week and wash in hot water and dry on high heat.
- Keep clutter picked up – bed bugs hide in books, boxes, clothing, etc.

If you want to get rid of something that’s infested with bed bugs, you have to seal that in plastic bags too.

Otherwise the bugs will just hitch a ride to someone else’s house – or maybe right back to yours. So seal it up real good and then you can put it out in the trash.
• Vacuum thoroughly once a week. Look for bed bugs while you clean especially around the edge of the mattress and the box spring. A careful inspection of these areas will help prevent bed bugs from becoming established, and an early infestation is easier and cheaper to treat.
• If you buy used items, always carefully inspect these items BEFORE you bring them into your home. This includes all used furniture, mattresses or box springs, bedding, luggage, bags and purses, and used clothing and books. Remember: eggs and the immature bed bugs are very small and hard to see, so look very closely.
• Stay clutter free. Remove boxes and other stored items in bedrooms.
• Keep your bed at least six inches from the walls. Don’t allow bedding to touch the floor, and keep clothing and other items off the bed.
• Seal cracks, crevices, and other hiding places. This will also discourage movement of bed bugs from one room to another. Repair and seal cracks in plaster, walls, and baseboards; repair or remove loose wallpaper.
• If you store items in a self-storage unit, inspect your items carefully before you bring them home.
• Don’t place your bags and personal belongings in the floor or furniture when you are away from home. If possible, place them on a hard chair or table.
• If you rent furniture, carefully inspect it before you allow it into your home.
• If you buy a new bed, covering the new mattress and box spring with new encasements and placing interceptors under the bed legs will help prevent possible infestations in the future.
• Do not buy a used mattress.
How should we get rid of bugs that are living in the floorboards, furniture, rugs and electrical outlets? I can’t exactly put that in a sealable plastic bag...

No ma’am, that is true. For that you need a vacuum with a crevice tool, just like this one. You’ll have to vacuum baseboards, outlets, lamps, dressers and bedroom furniture, chairs, wall pictures, the bed frame, mattress and box springs, even the TV and the alarm clock. You’ll have to do that every three days for two whole weeks, since there will be bed bug eggs hatching for a while.
If you think you have come into contact with bed bugs

• Before you go inside your home, remove your clothes and personal belongings outside the house. Immediately go inside and shower.
• Wrap your discarded clothing and bags in a sealable plastic bag. Leave in the hot sun for three days. Temperatures inside the plastic bag must reach 140 degrees.
• Alternately, you can place the bags in a freezer for 3 days.

But this is very important: when you’re done vacuuming, make sure you put the vacuum bag into a large plastic bag that can be sealed shut. Do this as soon as you’re finished vacuuming ’cause you want to get those bugs out of your house. Seal the bag tightly, make sure it’s secure, and then it’s safe to put in the trash. You gotta seal it though or those bugs are going to spread all over your neighborhood – and probably come right back here, too.
I hope you like doing laundry. Every day for the next two weeks you’ll need to wash bed sheets and covers in hot water, then put them through the dryer on high heat for 30 minutes. Any clothes that might have been in contact with bed bugs need to be washed and dried on hot, too.

Disposing of Infested Bedding and Belongings

When you are disposing of personal belongings, it is very important to take steps to prevent the spread of bed bugs. To make sure bed bugs do not spread throughout your community or end up right back at your home, follow these steps:

1. Never sell or donate infested furniture or clothing.
2. Prevent the spread of bed bugs to other rooms in your home by making sure to tightly wrap and seal all items in plastic before moving them out of the infested area. This is particularly important with mattresses, where bed bugs are likely to live.
3. Destroy infested furniture before discarding it to make sure that no one else picks it up and takes it home. Slash the upholstery, spray paint the item, or otherwise tear it apart.
4. Make sure no one picks up infested items by spray painting or otherwise marking them with the word, “Infested with Bed Bugs!”
5. Before removing an item from the infested area, seal the item in a plastic bag and make sure the seal is tight. This keeps bed bugs from dropping off into other rooms of your home.
6. After vacuuming, immediately place the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it in an outdoor trash container. Bed bugs can crawl out of vacuum cleaner bags.

And if we do all that, the bed bugs will leave us alone?

These steps are very, very important, but they must be done carefully and consistently. You can’t skip even a single day on the laundry. If you clean up the clutter, vacuum every three days and keep the sheets properly cleaned, then with my professional know-how, we’ll be able to get rid of these guys.
That’s up to you. To make sure you don’t ever get bed bugs again, follow all the steps to prevent them from coming into your home in the first place.

For good?
The problem with using pesticides to treat a bed bug problem is that if you use the wrong kind of pesticide, or if you use it wrong, you’ll likely make your bed bug problem worse. Spraying may hurt some of the bugs, but the rest will spread to other rooms in your house and hide out where the pesticides can’t reach, making your problem double. The best thing to do is to consult a professional who has experience treating bed bug infestations.

- Never use a pesticide indoors that is intended for outdoor use. It is very dangerous and won’t solve your bed bug problem.
- Using the wrong pesticide or using it incorrectly to treat for bed bugs can make you and your children sick, will not solve the problem, and is likely to make the infestation worse by causing the bed bugs to spread and hide where the pesticide won’t reach them.
- Before using any product, check to see if the product is effective against bedbugs -- if bed bugs aren’t listed on the product label, the pesticide has not been tested on bed bugs and it may not work. Don’t use a product or allow a pest control operator to treat your home unless bed bugs are named on the product label.
- Before using any pesticide product, READ THE LABEL FIRST, then closely follow all directions for use.
- Keep in mind that any pesticide product without an EPA registration number has not been reviewed by EPA, so we haven’t determined how well the product works.
- For assistance with choosing a pesticide registered for consumer use, you may also check with the Cooperative Extension Service office in your area. In Missouri, check with http://extension.missouri.edu/directory/Places.aspx.
Bed Bug Hangouts

Some people believe that bed bugs are only found in poor neighborhoods or in dirty, cluttered homes and motels, but that’s not true. Bed bugs have been found in exclusive resorts and expensive homes and hotels. Common places that bed bugs are found include:

- single-family homes
- multi-family homes
- apartment buildings and complexes
- schools
- hotels, motels
- hospitals
- dorm rooms
- dressing rooms
- buses and taxis
- restaurants

That’s why it’s always important to be on the lookout for bed bugs. Be aware of your surroundings, avoid placing your bags and personal belongings on the floor or furniture when you are away from home, and if you think you have come into contact with bed bugs, follow the steps for preventing infestation in box #2.