



Bed Bugs

How to prevent, detect, and remedy this growing threat

What are bed bugs? Bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed on warm-blooded animals. Hatchling bed bugs are about the size of a poppy seed, and adults are about 1/4 of an inch in length. From above they are oval in shape, but are flattened from top to bottom.

Where do they occur? They are usually in rooms where people sleep, and hide near beds or other furniture used for sleeping. They are most active at night, but will seek out food during the day when hungry. Bed bugs are known to hide in cracks and crevices around the room and within furniture, especially bed frames, mattresses, and box springs. Cluttered rooms provide additional hiding places and make extermination difficult.

How to detect infestation? Bed bugs may be present if residents complain of bites that occurred while sleeping. Check for following signs:

- Eggs in the folds and creases of bed linens or the seams and tufts of mattresses and box springs.
- Pleats of curtains, beneath loose areas of wallpaper near the bed, in corners of desks and dressers, within spaces of wicker furniture, behind cove molding, and in laundry or other items on the floor or around the room.
- Dark brown or reddish fecal spots of bed bugs may show on bed linens, mattress or walls near the bed.
- Heavily infested homes may have a peculiar coriander-like odor.

Adhesive-based traps used for sampling insects or rodents are not particularly effective for trapping bed bugs.

What to do if bed bugs are found?

- Reduce clutter to eliminate hiding places
- Thoroughly clean infected areas:
 - Scrub surfaces with a stiff brush.
 - Dismantle bed frames to clean.
 - Remove drawers and turn furniture over to inspect all surfaces.
 - Enclose mattresses and box springs in permanent encasement. Seal seams or any tears with permanent tape. Any bugs inside will eventually die.
 - Pull bed away from wall, tuck blankets and sheets away from floor, and place bed legs into dishes of mineral oil.
 - Caulk and seal all holes where pipes and wires penetrate walls and floor, and fill cracks around baseboards and cove moldings.
 - Have landlord contact a licensed pest control operator

What rights do tenants have? Landlords and property owners have a legal obligation to provide safe and habitable accommodations for tenants. Certain infestations, including bed bugs, may constitute an unacceptable condition. Tenants have an obligation to cooperate with owners and landlords. This includes preparing the apartment so that the pest control operator can easily inspect the rooms and treat if necessary. Contact your state or municipal health agency for more guidance on these issues.