

Bed Bugs

GENERAL INFORMATION



What they do:

Bed bugs are not known to transmit diseases. They prefer to hide during the day, crawl out and feed while you sleep. They do not like to ride on their hosts like fleas and ticks. They hitchhike in furniture, suitcases, boxes, pocketbooks, toys, laptops, book bags, briefcases, coats and other personal items.

Identification:

- Adults are up to ¼ inch long, about the size of an apple seed, usually dark brown with a flat body.
- Young bed bugs look much like the adults but are smaller and may be lighter in color or almost colorless.
- After a blood meal bed bugs may look swollen and reddish.
- Eggs are white, oval and about 1 mm long.
- Look for the bugs, small dark spots (feces) secreted after feeding and blood spots on sheets after you sleep.
- Bed bugs usually move quickly when found.

Right:
A mature
bed bug.



Left: Bed
bugs on a
mattress.



Biology:

- A female can lay 200 – 500 eggs during a lifespan.
- Bed bugs can live 6 months or longer without a blood meal.
- Bed bugs cannot jump or fly, but may crawl 10 – 20 feet.
- Bed bugs are not necessarily found in unsanitary conditions as cockroaches and other pests often are. (Higher priced hotels/vacation rental properties are no less vulnerable.)

Where they hide:

- They hide around the edges of the mattress, box springs and bed frames; in cracks and crevices of bed frames, headboard and other furniture and on used, rental, antique or discarded bedding and furniture.
- Bed bugs hide in cracks and crevices in the home around baseboards, moldings, loose wallpaper, outlets, switches and electronic equipment.
- Dismantle beds when possible.
- Remove drawers to inspect inside of dressers.
- Pull back the dust covers around the bottom of chairs and check the legs and frame.
- Check lamps, clocks, phones and other items on night-stands. A flash light will be helpful.

For more information, please contact Nash County Environmental Health at 252-462-9829.

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Travel precautions:

- Inspect the area for bed bugs. Lift the mattress, lift the box spring, and inspect the bed frame and head-board. Bed bugs often hide behind headboards hung on walls. Concentrate along seams, beading, buttons, labels, cracks and crevices.
- Inspect other furniture in sleeping areas, especially furniture close to the bed.
- Consider putting your items in sealed plastic bags overnight.
- Do not put luggage or other items on the floor or bed.
- Use luggage stands in hotel rooms.
- Bring only necessary items into the room.
- If you find signs of bed bugs, talk with staff and ask for another room.
- Avoid adjoining rooms or rooms directly above or below rooms suspected of having bed bugs.
- If you suspect you were in an infested area do not take items back into your home without precautions. Report bed bugs in hotels and motels to the Local Health Department.

Control:

A multi-targeted approach is required to eliminate bed bugs (adults, nymphs and eggs). Bed bugs can survive 6 months without a blood meal, so just leaving a home for a few weeks or storing items for a short time in hopes of starving them will not eliminate bed bugs. For severe infestations, a professional pest exterminator is recommended.

- Clean thoroughly, eliminate clutter and discard unused items (seal items in plastic bags before removal)
- Pay special attention to hard to reach spaces such as closet floors and upper shelves
- Vacuum thoroughly all areas and seal contents of vacuum in plastic bags
- Consider commercial steam cleaning products for furniture (with special attention to cracks, seams, joints, and undersides) Consider discarding items like upholstered furniture that are difficult to treat. Make any items you discard unusable to prevent spreading the problem into other homes.
- Enclose mattresses and box springs with encasements manufactured for that purpose (leave no gap or opening)
- Double sided tape on bed frame legs or commercial traps may help prevent bed bugs from crawling onto a bed, but alternate routes (such as blankets or sheets touching the floor) must be eliminated.
- Washable items can be washed and dried at the highest temperature setting. Items that cannot be washed may be heat treated to kill eggs in a dryer on the highest temperature setting for 30 minutes.
- Items that may be damaged by high temperature laundering or heat treatment (luggage, children's toys, shoes) may be sealed in plastic bags and placed in a freezer for several days. The length of time depends on the item.
- Sunlight may be used to treat for bed bugs. A vehicle can be closed and parked in the sun for a few days. Items may be sealed in black plastic bags and exposed to sunlight for a few days. The bagged items can be placed inside a vehicle. Depending on the weather, an effective kill temperature can be reached. All parts of items must reach 130 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Insecticides may be helpful. Ensure that the product is labeled specifically to kill bed bugs and follow label instructions carefully. Insecticide treatment may take multiple applications as allowed by label. Allow time for treatment to work.
- Foggers do not reach bed bugs hiding in cracks and crevices and are not effective.
- Do not bring new items or items that have been treated into the home until you are certain that the bed bugs are eliminated. Antique, used, salvage, or discarded items may harbor bed bugs.