

BED BUG FACT SHEET

General Information

Bed bugs are parasites that preferentially feed on humans. If people aren't available, they instead will feed on other warm-blooded animals, including birds, rodents, bats, and pets. Adult bed bugs are brown to reddish-brown, oval-shaped, flattened, and about 3/16 to 1/5 inch long. Their flat shape enables them to readily hide in cracks and crevices. Bed bugs cannot fly. Bed bugs hide during the day in dark, protected sites. They seem to prefer fabric, wood, and paper surfaces. They usually occur in fairly close proximity to the host, although they can travel far distances.

Method of initial infestation

There are several means by which dwellings can become infested with bedbugs. People can often acquire bedbugs at hotels, motels, and bed-and-breakfasts, thanks to increased domestic and international tourism, and bring them back to their homes in their luggage. They also can pick them up by inadvertently bringing infested furniture or used clothing to their household. If someone is in a place that is severely infested, bedbugs may actually crawl onto and be carried by people's clothing. Finally, bedbugs may travel between units in multi-unit dwellings (such as condominiums and apartment buildings), after being originally brought into the building by one of the above routes. This spread between units is dependent in part on the degree of infestation and whether or not infested items are dragged through common areas while being disposed of, resulting in the shedding of bedbugs and bedbug eggs while being dragged.

Feeding habits

Bedbugs are generally active only at night, with a peak attack period about an hour before dawn, though given the opportunity, they may attempt to feed at other times of day. After feeding for about five minutes, the bug returns to its hiding place. Although bedbugs can live for up to 18 months without feeding, they typically seek blood every five to ten days. Bedbugs have not been linked to the transmission of any disease and are not regarded as a medical threat. Some individuals, however, can get skin infections and scars from scratching bites. The effect of these bites on humans varies from person to person, but often cause welts and swelling that are more itchy and longer-lasting than mosquito bites.



Common location of infestations

Bedbugs are very often found in beds, usually either the seams of a mattress (usually the seams closest to the sleeper), in the boxspring, or within the structure of the bed itself. They can also be found in a wide variety of locations in a home, such as behind baseboards, behind a picture frame, within books (near the bed), in telephones, or radios near the bed, within the folds of curtains. Bedbugs are capable of travelling as far as 100 feet to feed, but usually remain close to the host in bedrooms or on sofas where people may sleep.

Bed Bug Detection

Bed bugs infest only a small proportion of residences, but they should be suspected if residents complain of bites that occurred while sleeping. The bedroom and other sleeping areas should be carefully examined for bed bugs and signs of bed bug activity. Folds and creases in the bed linens, and seams and tufts of mattresses and box springs, in particular, may harbor bed bugs or their eggs. They may also be found within 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. Sometimes, characteristic dark brown or reddish fecal spots of bed bugs are apparent on the bed linens, mattress or walls near the bed.

If bed bugs are found or suspected you must contact your manager immediately. The successful abatement of a bed bug infestation requires a cooperative effort between residents, management and treatment providers.

Prevention

Have a regular house cleaning schedule including vacuuming of mattresses and other furniture. Frequently launder bedding and clothing and dry in hot dryer. This process will kill all stages of bed bugs. Do not bring second hand clothing and furniture into your home. Avoid socializing with individuals that have bed bug infestations in their residences. Avoid clutter, such as stacks of clothing, paper items and cardboard, in order to reduce the places that bed bugs can hide. After travel closely check your luggage and clothing and immediately launder all clothing items.

