

College and University Bed Bug Background and Treatment

Bed Bug Identification & Behavior

Bed bug adults are small, brownish insects, just under a 1/4 inch long and are relatively flat. They are nearly as wide as they are long, and oval in shape. Immature bed bugs (nymphs - instars) resemble the adults, but are much smaller and lighter in color. Newly hatched nymphs are translucent and are no bigger than a pinhead (1 mm about the size of a letter on a penny). The eggs are very small (approximately 1mm), whitish, and very difficult to see on most surfaces without magnification (individual eggs are about the size of a dust speck).



Bed Bug eggs
PestWorld.org



Bed Bug nymphs-instars
PestWorld.org



Adult Bed Bug
M. Potter/Univ. Kentucky

Both immature and adult bed bugs feed exclusively on blood and while they have been shown to feed on other animals such as mice, dogs, cats, rabbits, etc., their primary food source comes from humans. Bed bugs do not live on, or infest people instead they are similar to a mosquito that feeds and then leaves. They are nocturnal insects and spend most of the daylight hours hiding in locations where they are unlikely to be seen. They are most active late at night when the occupants of the structure are sleeping, during which time they come out of their hiding places to feed. They cannot fly or jump instead, they move about by crawling. If they are present in a home, they are usually associated with the bed or couch so that the bug can be in close association with its food source but can also be found in other areas as well.

Bed Bugs and Disease

Despite the fact that bed bugs feed on blood they have never been shown to be effective at transmitting diseases. As a result while being bitten by bed bugs may be very upsetting, aside from the itchy red welts that may result from their bite, they are not considered a medically important pest. The reaction to the bite can also vary quite a bit from one person to the next. The most common reaction is similar to that of a mosquito bite, however some reactions can be more severe and then there are some individuals do not react at all.

How bed bugs are introduced

Bed bugs do not simply wander in from the outside; instead they have to be transferred from one infested environment to another. Because of this, bed bugs have evolved into masters of hitchhiking. It is very unlikely that you have a problem with bed bugs if you have not picked up an item that is infested, stayed in an infested environment or had someone visit you that has been in an infested environment.

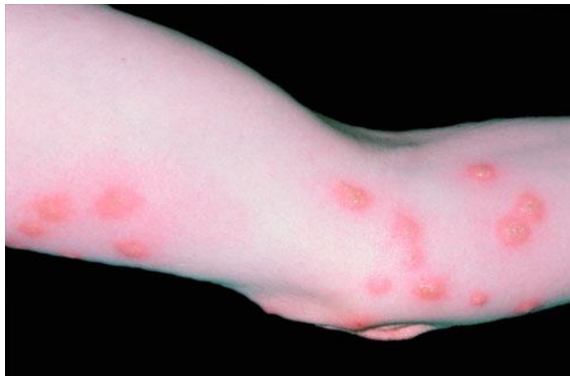
Avoid getting bed bugs

To prevent bed bugs from getting into your room, do not bring any used or discarded items into your room. Also, if you were at a location you thought could have bed bugs, inspect everything you brought with you (backpack, luggage, etc.) for the presence of bed bugs. Pay special attention to seams, folds,

zippers or any other location that provides the bed bugs with a hiding place. There are many other ways bed bugs can be transported into your room. Visit the website links referenced at the end of this piece for more information.

Bed bug symptoms and signs

If you repeatedly wake up with unexplained bug bites on your body this could be a sign that you are experiencing a bed bug problem. Another thing to look for is live bugs matching the description above. Even if it turns out not to be a bed bug, housing should be aware that another bug problem exists within your room. Finally, if you see dark brownish black stains appearing on your linens or mattress this could be a sign of a bed bug infestation.



Multitude of bed bug bites in a reactive host
WebMD.com



Adults, nymphs, eggs, shed skins, and fecal spots
on a mattress
M. Potter/Univ. Kentucky

If you suspect you have bed bugs

The first and most important thing is to contact the student housing office. Student housing departments around the country take this problem very seriously and have a pest control contractor to deal with these issues.

Cooperation is Key - PREPARATION

Our primary goal is to get all of the bed bugs eliminated from your room in as timely a fashion as possible and your cooperation is key in doing so. Another important thing to do is to try not to panic. We know having bed bugs is a very stressful situation but be assured we can take care of the problem and we will do so as swiftly as possible.

There are several things that you should not do:

1. Do not throw items away or remove them from your room

If items are not removed in the correct fashion you may inadvertently spread the problem into the halls and other areas. In addition, once items have been discarded they may be picked up by another unsuspecting student spreading the problem to their room.

2. Do not attempt to control the bed bugs on your own

Any actions that you take to control bed bugs on your own could complicate the problem and may cause unexpected problems for others. In most college settings, the student should advise housing who will then take the appropriate steps.

3. Do not relocate yourself to another room

While the initial instinct is to get out of the room and sleep elsewhere, in doing so you run the risk of taking bugs with you in your belongings. Instead the student should contact housing immediately so that the appropriate corrective actions can be taken.

In addition to reporting any suspected bed bug activity to the housing department, there are a few other things that you can do to help in reducing the likelihood of perpetuating the bed bug problem.

1. Clean up clothes and general clutter found throughout the room.

Not only does clutter provide an ideal place for bed bugs to hide that cannot be treated, but it also makes completing the bed bug service very difficult.



Cluttered closet

2. Bag laundry and launder in hot water

Your clothes could have bed bugs or their eggs. By correctly laundering the clothes you will further reduce the spread of the bugs. Place linens and other items that can be laundered items in plastic bags and take the bag directly to a laundering facility. Dump the contents of the bag into the laundry machine and place the empty bag inside a clean bag. These items should be laundered in the hottest possible water setting and/or dried for at least 30 minutes. Bed bugs are susceptible to heat and this exposure will kill any bugs as well as their eggs. If you cannot wash the clothes on a hot wash cycle, then dump the bag directly into a hot dry cycle which will serve the same purpose. As soon as the items have been dumped from the bag into the washer or dryer the bag should be disposed of in an outdoor dumpster.



Securely Bagged clothes

After washing these items, anything that does not need to be used immediately should be placed in a clean garbage bag and sealed tightly. This will assure you that the clothes/bedding is free of bed bugs and will remain free until the problem is eliminated from your room. If you need to use it over the next month or so, keep it in your room in an organized, neat fashion.

Other than cleaning and laundering, leave the rest of the service to the trained professionals. Inspecting excessively, treating on your own or throwing items out can spread the problem and make it more difficult to treat.