

Bed Bug Awareness Tuesday

HOW TO AVOID BED BUGS: KNOW THE SIGNS AND HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD

Every day we take small steps to protect ourselves from daily dangers and irritants. We don't think twice about wearing seatbelts, applying sunscreen or spraying bug repellent when heading outdoors. But what about insects that aren't easily deterred? How to avoid bed bugs begins with knowing signs to spot them, and taking precautionary steps to prevent the spread.

It's not easy figuring out how to keep bed bugs away. At one point, they were nearly eliminated in the United States and no longer deemed a threat as their population dwindled to substantially low numbers. However, they've made a resurgence in recent years and **can now be found in all 50 states**. Before determining what repels bed bugs, it's important to know that these persistent parasites are quick to follow a blood meal and breed and multiply at breakneck speeds. But there are ways to decrease the likelihood of becoming their next host.

→ Spot the Bloodsuckers

Before heading out in search of what keeps bed bugs away, you need to be able to make an accurate identification and not confuse them with other insects. **Bed bugs are usually reddish-brown, flat, small, and oval-shaped**. Typically the size of an apple seed, adults are roughly ¼ inch in length and have six legs and antennae. Baby bed bugs – otherwise known as nymphs – are tiny, no bigger than the size of a pinhead, and can be easily missed if you don't know what you're looking for. Eggs are small, oval, white and are glued to surfaces. They typically resemble grains of sugar.

→ Stay on Alert While on the Road

A good rule of thumb when traveling is to thoroughly check your hotel room or home rental, paying close attention the bedroom. Bed bugs are usually found on or near the mattress so pull the covers back, and even the mattress pad, to take a closer look. Don't forget to inspect the crack of seams and along any tags. If possible, don't keep your luggage and bags on the bed or floor and instead make use of valet racks where available or store your luggage in the bathroom while inspecting the room. Same goes for the airport. If you can, keep briefcases, backpacks and purses on your lap.

When returning from any trip, give any luggage a once-over before stepping through the door. If possible, use a flashlight to look inside pockets and along zippers. What repels bed bugs most is not giving them an opportunity to make themselves at home and making the environment as inhospitable as possible if they've somehow made their way onto your personal belongings. As you unpack, put all your items directly into the wash to be cleaned and dried on the highest setting as allowed by manufacturer instructions. **Bed bugs usually won't make themselves very comfortable on the clothes you're wearing**, but will jump at the chance to hitch a ride and get close to a human host.

→ Safeguard Your Home

Even if you haven't taken any recent trips or don't have plans to travel anytime soon, you should still understand how to help keep bed bugs away. These pesky parasites can catch a ride the same way you do, on buses, subways or in taxi cabs, and can even lurk in common areas at work and school. So, if you think about it, how to avoid bed bugs really starts at home. Cut down on the chances with these three easy steps:

1. Inspect the bed in every bedroom, including frames, mattresses, box springs and linens, and if you have kids, don't forget to check cribs and bassinets.
2. **Encase mattresses and box springs** with high-quality bed covers that have zippers.
3. If possible, avoid bringing second-hand furniture into your home. Used furniture including desks, chairs, sofas and even electronics can harbor hitchhikers if taken from an infested location.

Before moving into a condo, apartment complex or multi-family housing, be sure to ask the landlord or property managers about any history of infestation. Even though dwellings that have never battled bed bugs can also be at risk, the likelihood increases if they have.

<https://www.terminix.com/blog/education/how-to-avoid-bed-bugs>