

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH REGULATION AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATION



BEATING BED BUGS

What is a bed bug?

- Two species of bed bug feed on humans:
 - Common bed bug *Cimex lectularius* L.
 - Tropical bed bug *Cimex hemipterus* Fabr.
- Blood feeders on humans and pets.
- Adults are the size of an apple seed; nymphs and eggs are much smaller.
- Brown colored, flat, oval, with six legs and two antennae. They do not fly (no wings) or jump.
- They feed at night and hide by day.
- Development 5 to 8 weeks from egg to adult.

Do you have bed bugs?

- Unexplained, often itchy red spots appearing on skin usually in rows or clusters (skin reactions may be more severe). Drugs, medical, mental conditions, and allergies may mimic insect feeding.
- Look for scattered brown spots on bed linen and/or mattress seams, or favorite seats.
- Look for small oval brown insects on beds or chairs.
- Get expert to identify insects if found; carpet beetles, fleas, ticks, and small cockroaches can be mistaken for bed bugs.

What to do if you have bed bugs

- Don't panic; feelings of violation, disgust and stigma are common.
- If bed bugs are confirmed, tenants should notify landlord; property owners should contact pest control professionals with experience. Delays in treatment can make control harder.

Self treatments don't work

- Cooperate with your service professional. This may mean cleaning (clutter) ahead of treatment.
- Educate yourself. Be careful surfing the web. University (.edu) and government (.gov) sites are preferable, because information has been reviewed.

Bed protection during infestation

- Move bed 4"-6" away from wall.
- Put bed feet into insect interceptors or wrap legs with packing tape, sticky side out.
- Put mattress and box spring in encasements.
- Vacuum cracks of bed (not a perfect remedy, but it will offer some relief).
- Wash linen, remake bed; have nothing touch the floor.

Preventing bed bugs

Bed bugs may be found on:

- Discarded furniture, beds, appliances or other abandoned articles. Never bring home items found on the street.
- Purchased used furniture, TVs, linens, clothes, boxes, etc.
- Items from self-storage facilities.
- Rental furniture.
- Items carried by rental, moving or delivery trucks.
- Belongings of visitors, friends, or family members who have traveled or stayed in long-term care, hostels, universities, colleges, cruise ships, etc.
- Used gifted items from friends or family.
- Also, self infesting by bed bugs themselves, moving from room to room, apartment to apartment.



Travel precautions

When you travel:

- Select hot drier and wash tolerant travel clothes.
- Hard smooth luggage is preferable to fabric luggage.
- Pack plastic bags to seal purchases and/or items that may have become infested.
- At destination, inspect bed area for signs of bed bugs on headboards, mattress seams, adjacent furniture, and objects near to the bed.
- At destination, keep luggage off floors and beds, place them on high luggage racks.
- Do not unpack clothes.
- Always keep luggage closed.
- Place hanging items on shower rail.
- Keep shoes away from bed.
- Before checking out, seal suspicious items in plastic bags.
- On arriving home, unpack materials outside residence and take laundry, etc. directly to washer and/or drier for immediate cleaning.
- Delicate items or objects can be frozen in a freezer for 5 days to kill all stages of bed bugs.

Bed bugs with a pin



Female (left), male (right)



Nymphs