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Bed Bugs: Overview *“How To Not Let the Bedbugs Bite”*

Serving People with Disabilities in Community Settings

Prevention of Bedbugs

1. Replace wood frame beds with metal frames
2. Eliminate headboards
3. Use metal or plastic furniture or furniture that can be easily cleaned with soap and water
4. Use smaller cushions for sleeping that can be placed in a dryer or high
5. Use only white or light colored bedding
6. Use vinyl covered, seamless or enclosed mattresses
7. Purchase or paint bedroom furniture white for easier inspection and discard wicker
8. Seal any areas that a credit card can fit into with silicone caulk to eliminate hiding places
9. Room perimeters should be inspected and caulked with silicone sealant
10. Openings around pipes or other structures should be sealed
11. People should sleep in their rooms to avoid spreading bedbugs to other rooms
12. People should not store belongings under beds when addressing a bedbug outbreak in order to avoid providing them with a convenient hiding place

Donated Item Guidelines

1. Wash and especially dry on hot all cloths, shoes, coats, linens, blankets and plush toys
2. Sort items on clean linoleum floor
3. Shake out items
4. Ban cardboard boxes for donations and instead ask for clear plastic bags

For additional information please see—http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/bb_guidelines/

Introduction

Bedbugs are mentioned in ancient Greek text as early as 400 BC and were initially thought to have some medicinal value in treating snake bites and ear infections. There are academics that believe they may have originated in the Middle East, in caves inhabited by bats and humans. However, despite their early historical appearance they were rare until 17th century London.

By the 1940's bedbugs were almost eradicated in the developed world due to the pesticide DDT as well as other household pests that served to control their numbers. But they have returned with a vengeance since the mid-1990's.

The reason for the bedbugs return has been the basis for widespread speculation. Explanations for their revival include greater foreign travel, more second hand purchasing of household items and a greater focus on control of other insects, resulting in the death of many of the bedbugs natural enemies that served to control their population.



What is a Bedbug

Bedbugs, also known as the Cimicidae, are small, oval, non-flying parasitic insects that feed by sucking blood from humans or animals. The Bedbug goes through 6

developmental stages, shedding or molting its skin until reaching maturity.

The discarded outer shells look like clear exoskeletons of the bugs themselves. Once grown they are visible to the naked eye, reddish brown in color and about the size of an apple seed (4-5 mm in length and 1.5-3 mm wide).

Where are Bedbugs Found

Its not uncommon to hear claims that if you keep your home clean and only visit the best, clean hotels or establishments, you and your family will be safe from the bedbug. But this type of thinking can't be further from the truth.

While bedbugs are often reported where sanitation conditions are poor or where birds or mammals (particularly bats) are nesting on or near a home, they also thrive in clean environments. The bedbug doesn't care if their environment is clean or dirty. All they need is a warm host and plenty of hiding places. Even pristine homes and hotels can harbor bedbugs.

Bedbugs tend to be most common in areas where people sleep and generally concentrate in bedrooms. However, they can live in any area of the home and find it most comfortable in tiny cracks in furniture, textiles and upholstered furniture. They hide in cracks and crevices of mattresses, box springs, bed frames and headboards. In addition, bedbugs are frequently found under peeling paint, carpeting, light switch plates, electrical outlets or loose wallpaper.

Bedbugs spread easily and can live for months at a time without feeding. They live in any ar-

ticle of furniture, clothing, or bedding so they and their eggs may be present in used furniture or clothing. They spread by crawling and may contaminate multiple rooms in a home or apartment building. They may also be present in boxes, suitcases, or other goods that are moved from residence to residence or from hotel to home.

Bedbugs are common in crowded lodgings that experience high turnover in occupancy, such as apartment complexes, dorms, homeless shelters, and hotels

Signs and Symptoms of Bedbugs

Bedbugs are elusive and usually nocturnal, which can make them difficult to spot. They often rest in unnoticed dark locals and their eggs can be hidden along many varied and secluded locations. The telltale sign of bed bugs are fecal spots, blood smears on bed clothing and molts.



Bedbugs may be recognized by their unusual biting pattern. Once they have found a host they have the tendency to leave several bites lined up in a row. Medical professionals who have gained expertise in caring for those with bedbug bites refer to these marking as the “breakfast, lunch, and dinner sign” signifying the sequential feeding that occurs from site to site.

In addition to physical signs of intrusion, bedbugs have glands that secrete an odor that smells like cilantro, almonds or over-ripe raspberries.

In addition to the aforementioned methods of discovery, dogs are being trained to pinpoint infestations and have been found to discover bedbugs in test at a rate of 97.5%. Moreover, a few companies in the United States are experimenting with high speed gas chromatography to detect bedbugs and other insects.

Bedbug Bites

The bite of a bedbug is generally painless and goes unnoticed. The skin that is exposed is the most likely to be bitten, such as the face, neck, hands, feet and arms. The bites characteristically present as itchy small, flat, or raised bumps on the skin with redness and swelling.

Furthermore, bedbug bites may be mistaken for flea or mosquito bites or other types of skin conditions, since they are difficult to distinguish from other insect bites or rashes.

Bedbugs can cause a number of health concerns beyond rashes. Failure to address an infestation may lead to ever increasing allergy problems and psychological issues, such as anxiety, stress and insomnia. They are also alleged to be infected by at least 96 human pathogens, but no study has clearly found that the insect is able to transmit the pathogens to a human being.

Treating Bedbugs Bites

There is no specific treatment for bedbug bites. The redness and itch of the bites usually goes away within a few weeks. If the itching is severe, steroid creams or oral antihistamines may be used for symptom relief. If secondary infections develop due to heavy scratching these areas may be treated with antibiotics. However, the best avenue for treating bedbugs is to avoid or exterminate them immediately.

Getting Ride of Bedbugs

Based on the available research, exterminating bedbugs is a very difficult and time consuming process. Once noticed the most effective way to avoid a larger outbreak is to immediately take steps to eradicate them. Medical and pest management professionals seem to agree that removing these pests usually requires a combination of self-help and professional extermination.

Prior to inspecting a home or facility for bedbugs the following steps should be taken:

- Reduce clutter
- Remove drawers
- Turnover furniture
- Launder infested garments and bed linen in hot water (120°F minimum).
- Thoroughly clean the infested rooms .
- Scrub infested surfaces with a stiff brush.
- Vacuum in any possible infested area
- Dispose of vacuum cleaner bag

Inspection List

Once the property is ready to be inspected the inspection should include a review of the following:

- Cracks and crevices in head and foot boards, attached side railings and supports
- Mattresses top, sides and bottom. Check all buttons, seams and rips.
- Electrical switch plates, pictures on walls, wall posters
- Cracks in plaster or seams in wall paper.
- Electrical appliances-radios, phones, televisions, etc., looking in hiding places.
- Tack strips under wall-to-wall carpeting and behind baseboards
- Secondhand beds, bedding, and furniture.

Following an inspection, chemical or non-chemical treatments may be employed and repeated. A reputable professional exterminator should be consulted in order to ensure a thorough inspection and extermination of bedbugs.

This Learning Curve is based information from the following resources: Cornell.edu, Wikipedia.com, Reference.com, Bedbeginfo.com, Medicine-Net.com, and MayoClinic.com