

Risk Management Considerations for Bed Bugs

There has been a reappearance of bed bugs over the past few years and it is a world-wide issue. The experts think it is due to an increase in high density living, the use of second hand items, international travel and a reduction in the use of very strong pesticides in addition to bed bugs building a resistance to common pesticides.

Bed bugs can be found in five star hotels, motels, dormitories, apartments, condos, private homes, buses and even in some public places. Anyone can get bed bugs, they don't discriminate.

Risk Management Considerations

There are two ways of getting bed bugs, migration and hitch hiking:

- Migration refers to when bed bugs walk to adjacent units. They will travel through the hallways, plumbing, electrical lines and any other means they can find.

"Hitch hiking" refers to when they climb into or on your bags, clothing or other belongings. This is how they can get from a hotel to your home, for example.

Biology of a bed bug:

- They feed at night and hide during the day.
- They prefer dark areas.
- They tend to hide near the bed or where the person normally sleeps.
- They are large enough to be seen with the naked eye.
- They do not fly or jump.

Avoid picking up bed bug "hitch hikers"

- Learn how to identify a bed bug by looking at pictures.
- When visiting a new location, only bring in what you need. Avoid placing bags close to walls and furniture. If this is unavoidable, place your belongings in a sealed plastic bag and examine it for bed bugs before leaving.
- Inspect your shoes, clothing and belongings before you leave the premises.
- If you find bed bugs, kill them immediately.

- Put clothes in the dryer for at least 30 minutes on high heat when you get home.

Regular inspection is important to prevent infestations.

You'll need:

- A flashlight.
- A tool to scrape along mattress seams and other crevices (hard piece of plastic cut into a long triangle will work).
- Cotton swabs for checking stains in crevices. Alcohol, glass-cleaner or baby wipes can be used to see if the spots dissolve into a reddish brown colour when rubbed. This could mean they are bedbug droppings.

If you find signs of droppings, widen the search

- Remove and inspect all bed linens.
- Remove electrical faceplates to see if bed bugs are living behind them. Pay extra attention to gaps in baseboards or rips/bumps in wallpaper.
- Check under and beside beds, couches and upholstered furniture. Look for white spots (eggs), live or dead bedbugs, or black/brown spots (dried blood or feces from bed bugs).
- Check between the folds of curtains, hemlines, inside the curtain rod and under the hardware.
- Look around windows, door casings, frames, hinges and the door latch.
- Search under area rugs and edges of carpets. If the carpet is wall to wall, check the carpet track strips.
- Other areas to look: picture frames, light fixtures, smoke detectors or any other wall mounted items
- Ceilings are another source and could mean they are coming from the unit above.

Treatment and Control

- Spray bed bugs with rubbing alcohol. This will kill the bugs and the eggs.
- Launder or discard bedding and clothes.
- Items that are too large to launder can be disinfected using extreme heat or cold. Note: it must be below freezing for at least two weeks, or above 120 degrees to be effective. Do not try to achieve either of these climates by adjusting your thermostat.

- Steam the bugs out. Bed bugs can be killed using steam – rent a steamer from a hardware store, use a laundry steamer or convert a kettle by inserting a plastic tube into the spout. Take care not to inject too much moisture as this could result in mold.
- Vacuum the house and immediately dispose of canister contents.
- Repair cracks in plaster/drywall, glue down any lifted wallpaper to eliminate hiding spots.
- Because a bed bug infestation is very hard to control, consider calling in a professional.

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