

Using This Guide

Bed bug infestations are increasingly common in the US. There are steps that can be taken to prevent bed bugs from infesting your home. When bed bugs are present, they can be safely controlled.

This guide will help you:

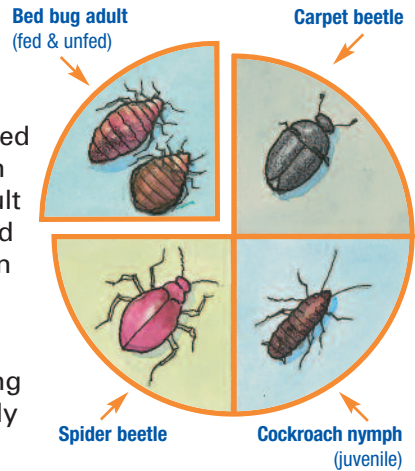
1. Learn more about bed bugs and how they thrive.
2. Prevent bed bugs from infesting your home.
3. Safely rid your home of bed bugs if they do occur.
4. Select and work with a pest control professional.

Recognizing a Bed Bug

From its appearance

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mainly on human blood. A newly hatched bed bug is semi-transparent, light tan in color, and the size of a poppy seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, have rusty-red-colored oval bodies, and are about the size of an apple seed.

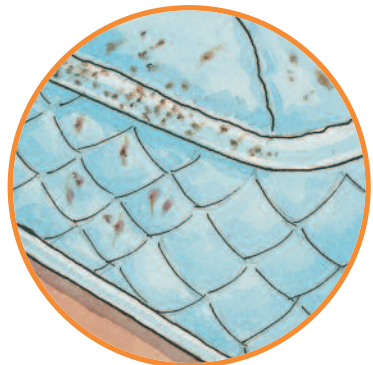
Bed bugs can be easily confused with other small household insects, including carpet beetles, spider beetles and newly hatched cockroaches (nymphs).



From its markings, droppings and eggs

Blood stains, droppings and eggs can be found in several locations including:

- Mattress seams and tufts, sheets, pillow cases and upholstered furniture.
- Crevices and cracks in furniture.
- Baseboards of walls.



From its bite

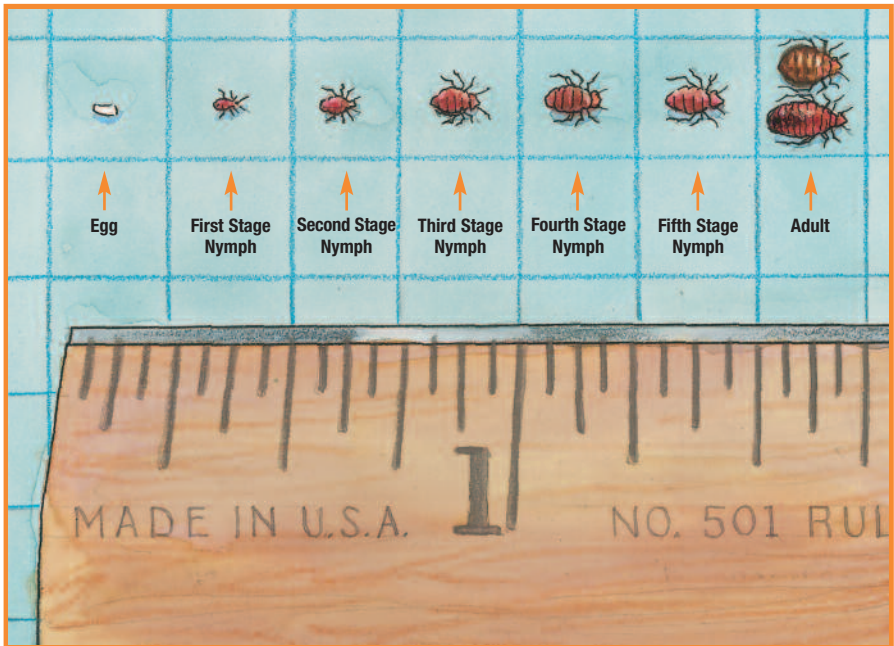
Some people do not react to bed bug bites. But for those who do, bite marks may appear within minutes or days, usually where skin is exposed during sleep. They can be small bumps or large itchy welts. The welts usually go away after a few days. Because the bites may resemble mosquito and other insect bites, a bump or welt alone does not mean there are bed bugs.



How Bed Bugs Grow and Reproduce

Bed bugs are most active when we sleep. They crawl onto exposed skin, inject a mild anesthetic and suck up a small amount of blood. Most people never feel the actual bite.

Bed bugs need a blood meal to grow and lay eggs. A female lays 5-7 eggs per week and if fed, will lay 200-500 eggs in her life. Eggs take about 10 days to hatch. Bed bugs are fully grown in 2 to 4 months and can live as long as a year.



The Health Effects of Bed Bugs

Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

- Bed bug bites can be very itchy and irritating. Most welts heal in a few days but in unusual cases, the welt may persist for several weeks. Usually an anti-itching ointment will help, but if bites become infected, people should see their doctor.
- The anxiety about being bitten can lead to sleeplessness, which can affect one's wellbeing. Properly and effectively responding to bed bugs helps to keep anxiety in check.

Some people become so desperate that they use illegal or excessive amounts of pesticides that can lead to poisonings. This guide provides advice on how to get rid of bed bugs safely.

Preventing Bed Bugs from Infesting Your Home

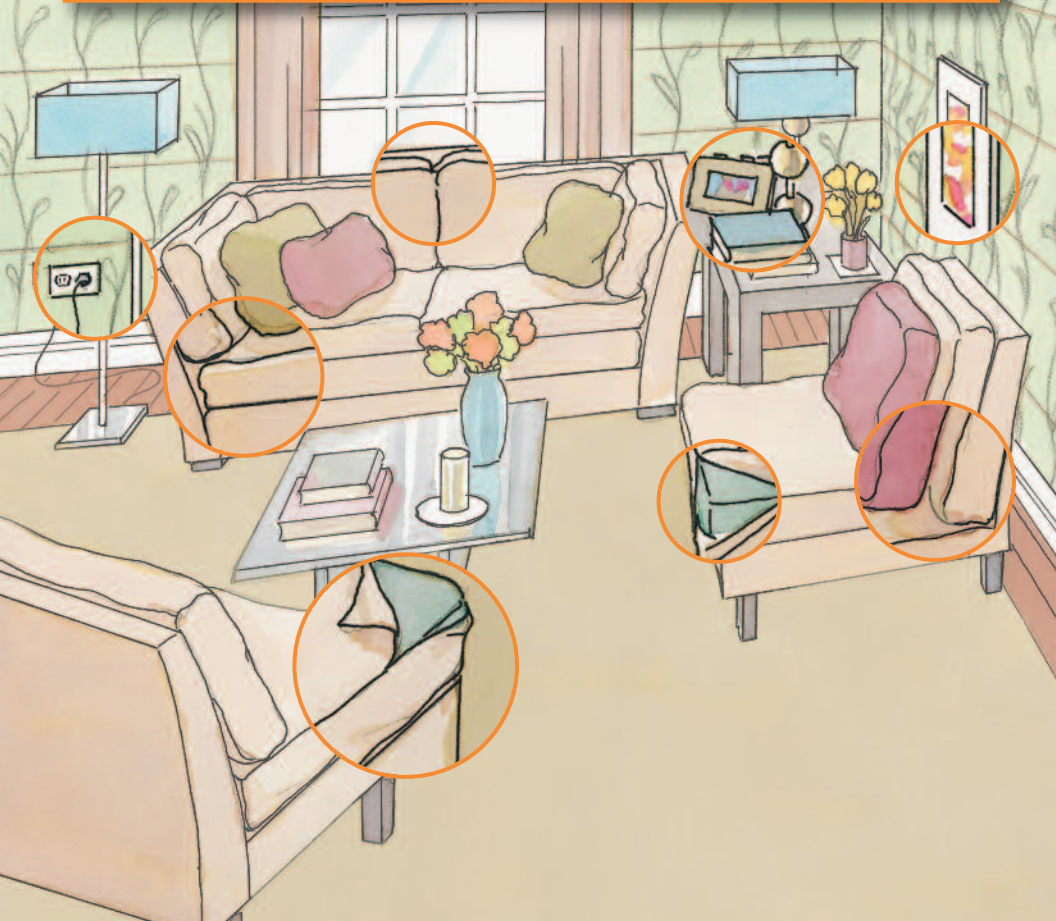
Bed bugs can enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage and clothing, and by traveling along connecting pipes and wiring.

- Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home.
- Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs.
- When traveling, inspect the bed and furniture. Keep suitcases off the floor and bed, and inspect them before you leave.
- If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can.
- Seal cracks and crevices with caulk, even if you don't have bed bugs. This will help prevent bed bugs and other pests from coming in.



Inspecting for Bed Bugs

Look for bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs (a flashlight and a magnifying glass will help). Start by looking in an area 10-20 feet around where you sleep or sit. That's the distance a bed bug will usually travel. Keep a written record of every room and location where you find signs of bed bugs. Share this record with a pest control professional.



Check mattresses, box springs, bed frames and bedding

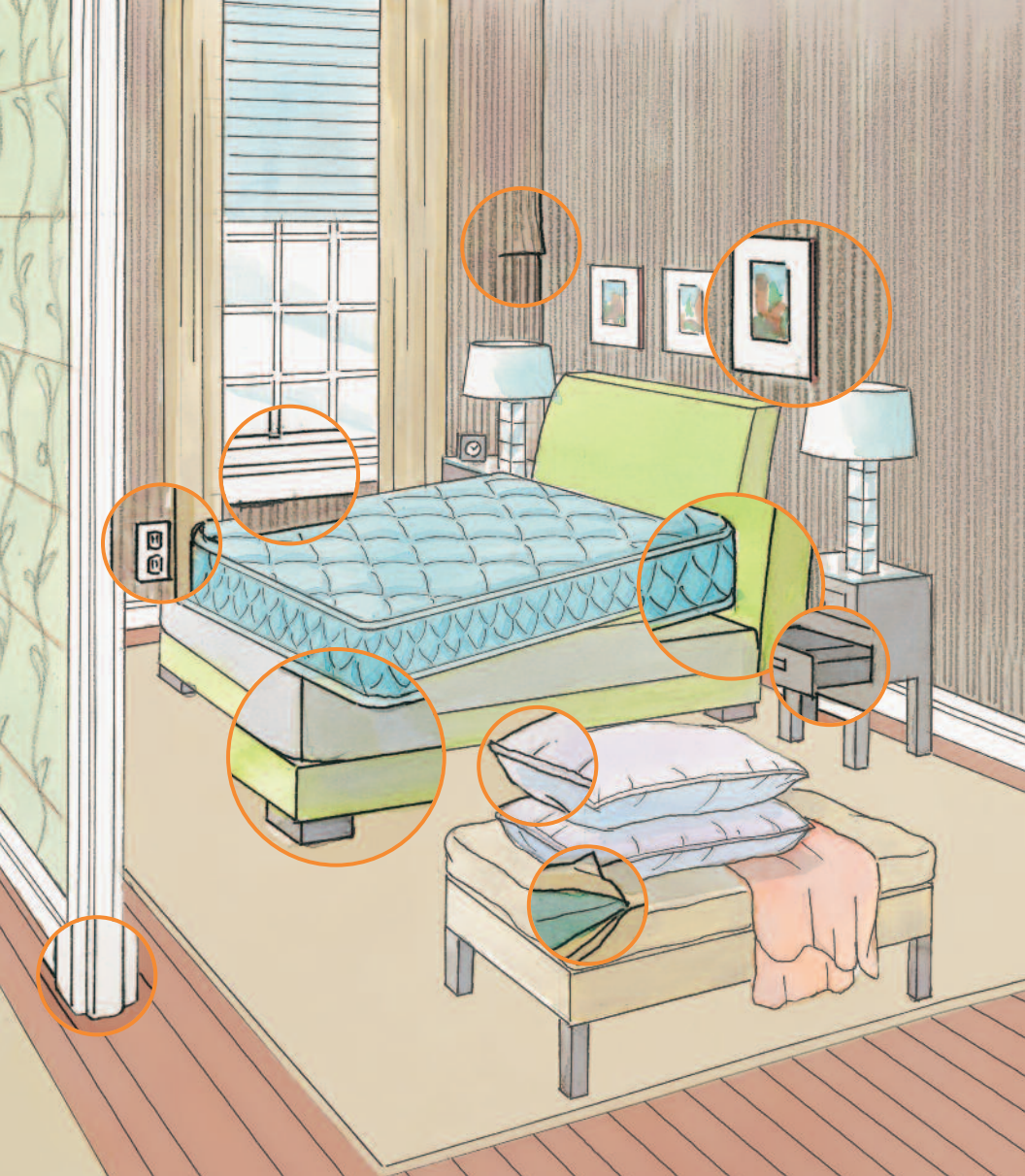
- Check the top and bottom seams, tufts and any rips in the covers of mattresses and box springs.
- Look underneath the bed and along the bed frame and headboards.

Check cracks and crevices in bedroom furniture, floor boards and baseboards, windows and door frames

- Use a flash light to inspect cracks and crevices of furniture, windows and door frames.
- Swipe a putty knife, an old subway or playing card into cracks and crevices to force bed bugs out. A hot blow-dryer on a low setting will

also work. If live bugs do come out, crush them with a paper towel and throw them away outside your building.

- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and even screw holes.



Check walls and wall hangings

- Remove and check zippers, seams and tufts in cushions of upholstered furniture, and their frames.
- Using crevice tools, check paintings, posters, pictures and mirrors.
- Check cracks in plaster and peeling wallpaper.
- Inspect the face plates of electrical outlets and light switches (by eye only – do not insert anything into areas with wires). Look in phones, clocks, smoke detectors and toys.



About the Use of Pesticides

Bed bug infestations usually require the use of pesticides. Only professionals should apply pesticides for bed bugs. Foggers and bug bombs are not effective against them.

Ask the professional to:

- Use the least-toxic pesticide labeled for bed bugs that will be effective.
- Follow all instructions and warnings on product labels.
- Tell you when it's safe to re-enter a treated room.
- Never spray the top of mattresses or sofas, and if needed, to use only small amounts of pesticides on their seams only.

***FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
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Adapted from NYC Dept of Health & Mental Hygiene