

## **Background Information about Bed Bugs**

### **What are Bed Bugs?**

- Bed bugs are small nocturnal insects that live by feeding on the blood of humans and other warm-blooded hosts. Bed bugs are generally active only at dawn, with a peak feeding period about an hour before sunrise. After feeding for about five minutes, the bug returns to its hiding place.
- Bites consist of a raised red bump or flat welt, and are often accompanied by intense itching. The red bump or welts are the result of an allergic reaction to the anesthetic contained in the bed bug's saliva, which is inserted into the blood of the host. Bed bug bites may appear indistinguishable from mosquito bites, though they tend to last for longer periods. Bites may not become immediately visible, and can take up to 9 days to appear. Bed bug bites tend to not have a red dot in the center such as is characteristic of flea bites. A trait shared with flea bites, however, is tendency towards arrangements of sequential bites. Bites are often aligned three in a row, giving rise to the colloquialism "breakfast, lunch and dinner."
- Bedbugs were originally brought to the United States by early colonists from Europe. Bedbugs requires patience and cooperation along with a diligent management program implemented by a pest management professional.
- There have been no known cases of bed bugs passing disease from host to host. Extensive testing has been done in laboratory settings that also conclude that bed bugs are unlikely to pass disease from one person to another. Therefore bed bugs are less dangerous than some more common insects such as the flea.
- Bed bugs thrive in places with high occupancy, such as hotels. Bed bugs were believed to be altogether eradicated 50 years ago in the United States and elsewhere with the widespread use of DDT.
- The discontinuation of DDT may account for the resurgence of these bugs in the US, as might the increase in international travel.
- Anyone can pick bed bugs up from a location where they presently exist – someone's apartment, other dorm rooms, movie theatres, etc. Bed bugs are equal opportunity pests – they will infest anyone, anywhere.
  - Bed bugs are not a sign of bad sanitation, any home can become infested regardless how dirty or clean it is.
  - Bed bugs must be introduced into an environment and do not fly, jump, or infest people.

### **What happens when the exterminator comes to my room?**

- If your room, suite or apartment is confirmed to have bed bugs, the Custodial Staff's exterminator will come to treat your room. You will be required to heat treat all clothing and bedding in the dryer we have designated for this purpose. Books and personal items that cannot be placed in the dryer may be treated with heat, cold, or a chemical strip. All your items will need to be placed into sealed plastic bags in order to make sure that bugs cannot be moved from place to place. Prior to the treatment, your room will essentially need to be emptied out in order for the treatment to be effective.
- The treatment will likely consist of a few different approaches:
  - A pesticide will be applied to locations within your room that may harbor the bugs.
  - The exterminator may place glue boards in your room. These boards can be good detectives and show the degree of success of the treatment. If the glue board collects

- bed bugs after its placement, then another treatment may be warranted. If this is the case, you should be back in touch with Custodial Staff as soon as possible.
- You should perform a THOROUGH and DETAILED vacuuming of your room and belongings. All of your room and items contained within it should be vacuumed on the outside surface and each drawer, crevice, etc. must also be vacuumed. This includes:
    - Mattress & Bed Frame
    - Desk and Chair
    - Inside Closet
    - Laundry Basket
    - Clock, phone
    - Mirror
    - Dresser
    - Books & Bookshelf
    - Blinds
    - Pictures and Posters
    - Area Rugs
    - CD Cases
    - Personal Furniture
    - Window and Frame
    - Electrical Equipment & Computer
    - Shoes and Shoe Boxes
    - Audio or Video Equipment
    - Perimeter of the Room
  - Your bagged items will need to be treated with hot, cold, or a chemical strip. We will work with you to implement this treatment.
  - While this process is taking place (a few hours), you will need to be out of your room. Once you are permitted back in your room, you may be able to bring in your freshly heat treated clothing and bedding and un-bag your other treated items.

**Since I travel quite a bit, what can I do to reduce my risk of bringing these bugs back with me?**

- Examine the room to seek potential hiding places for bedbugs, such as carpet edges, mattress seams, pillow case linings, head boards, wall trim or other tiny crack-like places bed bugs might hide.
- Look specifically at the mattress seams for signs of bed bug activity: droppings, eggs, bloodstains or even bed bugs themselves – hiding in tiny folds and seam lines.
- Never leave your clothing laying on the bed, or any location of possible infestation. Instead, use hangers or hooks capable of keeping all cloth distant from the floor or bed.
- Elevate suitcases off the floor on a tabletop or other hard surface.
- Close your suitcase/travel bag, when you're not using it. This way, the bugs may move over the top of your luggage during the night and have greater difficulty getting inside.
- Keep any bed bug you find (intact, if possible) to show the hotel owner.
- When you return from any travel (especially abroad) it is a good idea to take your suitcase to the laundromat so you can wash ALL items before taking the suitcase to your home, residence hall, etc..

### **What to be watching for...**

- Early detection of bed bugs is very important and will greatly facilitate the ability of pest management professionals to gain control in an efficient manner.
- Waking up each morning with bites that were not present the night before is an indication that bed bugs may be present. Bites can occur anywhere on the body, but are most prevalent on the upper body (arms, shoulders, and neck) or lower body (calf area). Not all people react to bed bug bites, however, in many people the bite will appear as a welt or rash and will often occur in rows of two or three bites. In this instance, you are encouraged to contact your Faculty Resident, the Residential Life and Housing Office, or a representative of the facility where you are lodging.
- Bed bugs may be seen actively crawling in the room, particularly during the evening hours or when the room is dimly lit. Adult bed bugs are about 3/16-inch long and 1/8-inch wide and are reddish brown in color. Immature bed bugs are much smaller (newly emerged bed bugs are only 1mm in length) and tend to be pale in color.
- Blood stains or smears on sheets, pillow cases, or along the edges/corners of mattresses are another sign that bed bugs may be present. They are typically a tar black color.

### **What should I do if I believe I have bed bugs?**

- Notify Residential Life and Housing personnel ASAP.
- Be prepared to follow the written instructions to the letter and in a timely manner.

### **What SHOULDN'T I do if I believe I have bed bugs?**

- Don't panic! Although bed bugs can be annoying, they can be battled safely and successfully if you follow all guidelines given to you by Residential Life and Housing or Custodial Services.
- If you believe you have bed bugs, do NOT wait until after 5pm on Friday to notify someone. It is not possible to get service from the exterminator on weekends.
- Do not apply pesticides on your own. Custodial Staff hires a licensed pest control operator to confirm the infestation and to develop an integrated pest management plan.
- Do not move your mattress or any furniture out into the hallway. Infested furniture can be cleaned and treated. Placing infested furniture (particularly mattresses) into common areas or on the street may simply help spread bed bugs to the rooms and suites of other individuals.
- Do not go sleep in a friend's room or in places off-campus. If you actually have bed bugs, you could spread them to others.