

Bed Bugs

Bed bugs... where do I start?

They are not here at this point in time, but we are told by pest control companies along the Seattle corridor that they are on their way to us, it is just a matter of time. Within the last couple of years they have broke out in numerous locations on the other side of the water. Since they hijack a ride with people, it is just a matter of a short time before we will be seeing them here on the peninsula. Time will tell just when that will be, just be watchful for those little clues we will be covering.

In watching out for bedbugs in your home, look in the areas they will hide. They are tiny little bugs that make their meal on YOU! They are brown to reddish-brown, oval-shaped, flattened, and about 3/16 to 1/5 inch long. They turn dark red, swell and elongate after they have been feeding. They are night feeders so you won't see them so readily by day; you will have to seek them out. You will be looking for the bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs. A flashlight and magnifying glass will come in handy. Their most popular locations are where you sleep and in dark protected sites. The distance they usually travel will be somewhere between 10-20 feet from where they are getting their blood meal, aka - you sleeping in your bed.

The following is a list of various places to inspect.

- ✓ Bedding, including mattresses, box springs and bed frame - inspect carefully a long both top and bottom seams, tufts and folds, and any rips in the fabric
- ✓ Furniture - on upholstered furniture check along folds, crevices and seams – remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and even screw holes
- ✓ Behind pictures on the wall and wall hangings - they will travel quite a distance to hide when the infestation is pretty heavy and they are fast moving
- ✓ Carpeting along tack strips of wall to wall carpeting
- ✓ Baseboards - seal crevices and joints
- ✓ Floor cracks - seal them with caulk to help prevent any bugs from entering electrical boxes
- ✓ Window and door frames
- ✓ Loosened wall paper
- ✓ Wall cracks - seal them with caulk to help prevent any bugs from entering
- ✓ Ceiling molding

Not only will you find bed bugs in your home, but anywhere there is a high rate of people occupancy turnover; such as hotels, motels, dormitories, shelters, and apartment complexes. They are also hitchhikers so they can spread out great distances by airplanes, ships, trains and buses. That is why it is so important when you travel that you are inspecting your luggage and clothing for these 'world travelers'. Be sure to keep your suitcases off the floor and beds while

staying in accommodations and don't forget to inspect them along with your clothes before you leave. Not only do you need to be careful with your travels, but also with that of your guests staying with you in your home. Also be very watchful of second-hand items such as clothing and furniture, especially beds and bedding. If you suspect that you have been in contact with bed bugs, it is necessary to either wash and dry your clothing on high temperatures OR store them in a sealed plastic bag until you can wash them.

When the bed bugs are not finding you, they will be attracted to animals like birds, bats and rodents. So be on the lookout for any entrances where these animals can access your house and seal these areas off. Be sure to eliminate those pests. When they decide to move in, they can live over a year waiting for a blood meal. Time is definitely on their side. Fleas can wait up to 9-10 months, but these guys can lie in wait even longer.

Quick attention to the problem will aid in faster elimination. Sanitation measures will aid in keeping control. Clearing out clutter will make it easier to access all areas for inspection and minimize the harborage areas accessible to the bed bugs. It is helpful to store non-essential items in another location until bed bugs have been eliminated. Daily vacuuming the areas you find evidence will be a good measure to take. Remember when done vacuuming; immediately the bag must be discarded, placing it in a plastic bag and sealing it tight. If not, they will just come marching back out and into your home. When cleaning up, wipe off dead bugs, blood stains, eggs and droppings with hot soapy water. Bedding needs to be laundered at 140 F and dried on hot for 20 minutes. The high heat is necessary to kill the bed bugs. As for mattresses and box springs, you can scrub the seams dislodging the bugs and eggs, and then vacuum. A zippered mattress cover would aid in preventing re-infestation. If the infestation is extreme, replacement of the bedding would be in order; but only AFTER the infestation has been eliminated or otherwise your new mattress will be readily infested too.

The best way to not get an infestation is to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM's). These are the defensive measures you can take to make sure that they don't move in.