



## Detection and Control of Bed Bugs in Lodging Establishments

Source: Minnesota Department of Health & University of Minnesota Extension

### Introduction

Bed bugs were almost eliminated in the United States more than forty years ago by mass treatments with older types of insecticides such as DDT. Over the past decade, bed bug infestations have increased throughout the U.S. and become more widespread. Rural and urban homes, retail stores, office buildings, nursing homes, motels and hotels in Minnesota have been affected by the pests.

The problem of a bed bug infestation in a motel or hotel is somewhat unique. When bed bugs invade a lodging establishment, the most important services the business offers – a clean, safe bed and a good night's sleep – are threatened. It is important therefore to consider both prevention *and* response tactics and strategies to deal with this problem. Regular inspections can **prevent the spread** of an infestation. Sensible controls and rapid response can contain infestations and **reduce the impact** on guests and the reputation of a business.

### What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They are flat, oval, reddish-brown and wingless. The adult is about 1/4 of an inch long and looks somewhat like a wood tick.



After the bed bug has taken a blood meal, its color will change from brown to purplish-red and the body of the bed bug becomes larger and more cigar-shaped. Young bed bugs (or nymphs) are much smaller - about 1/16-inch-long when they first hatch. Nymphs are nearly colorless, and become bright red after feeding.

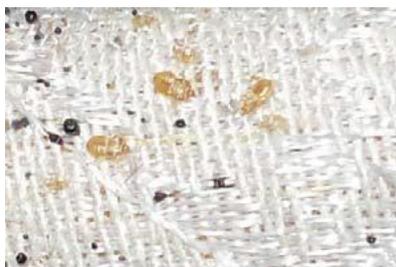
### What happens to people who are bitten by bed bugs?

Bed bugs are not known to carry disease, but the bites can be annoying. The bites are usually painless. It may take days for people to notice the small, flat or raised bumps on their skin that result from bed bug bites. Some people do not react at all. In others, bed bug bites may cause redness, swelling, and itching. A small number of people have a serious, immediate allergic reaction to bed bug bites requiring medical care.

## If I can't keep bed bugs out of my hotel, what can I do?

Bed bugs can easily enter your building on the clothing, luggage and other belongings of guests or staff. There is no practical means of using insecticides to prevent them from infesting rooms. Early detection is the best possible means of preventing major infestations in hotels.

- Train all hotel staff to watch for bed bugs. Staff who handle luggage or linens could spot bed bugs and head off an infestation in its early stages.
- Train housekeeping staff to look for signs of infestation every time they clean a room. This includes inspecting beds, baseboards, bedding and luggage stands for:
  - Live adult or young bed bugs;
  - Empty shells (or skins) that bed bugs cast off as they grow;
  - Black spots of feces – like grains of black pepper - in areas near the feeding site or where the bed bugs hide, and;
  - Small blood stains on sheets or mattresses.



- Periodically, have supervisory staff remove headboards to inspect behind them; and carefully inspect cracks and crevices in walls and other furniture.
- Always bag dirty linens and keep them away from clean linens. Place bagged linens in a wheeled tub to reduce movement of bugs from infested linens to other items and locations.
- Have staff keep their belongings in an

area separate from cleaning and laundering areas. This helps to prevent workers from picking up bed bugs, or bringing bed bugs from home to the hotel.

- Make sure that staff know how to properly control bed bugs in their own homes.
- Consider making additional, regular, more thorough inspections:

Thorough inspections by staff may include breaking down all furniture and inspecting cracks and crevices for signs of bed bugs.

Several pest management companies in Minnesota have dogs trained to detect bed bugs by scent. This may be the most thorough method currently available for detecting bed bugs. See the National Entomology Scent Detection Canine Association website (<http://nesdca.com/>) for more information.

## How should I respond, if a guest complains about bed bugs?

Have a plan in place and train staff to follow the plan. When a guest complains, staff should:

- Immediately offer a new room to the guest.
- Reassure the guest that bed bugs are not known to spread disease.
- Offer to launder or dry clean the guest's clothes. Possibly infested clothing and bedding should be washed separately in the hottest water and dried on the hottest cycle that is safe for the materials.
- Dry cleanable clothes can be put into a dryer for 20 minutes, prior to sending to a drycleaner.

- Provide plastic bags to hold the guest's luggage until it can be steam-cleaned or treated by a pest management professional.
- Confirm that you have bed bugs. Trap suspect insects on a piece of tape and have the bugs identified by a licensed pest management professional.
- Have a pest control professional perform a complete inspection and treatment of the room. If guests are being re-assigned to another room, that room should also be inspected before and after their stay.

## How can I control an Infestation?

First, if a room is infested, rooms across the hallway, and all rooms that have common walls, floors or ceilings with the infested room must be inspected. If more rooms are found to be infested, the adjacent rooms must, again, be inspected until no infestation is found in a bordering room.

A licensed, professional pest control company will use several means to control the infestation, including vacuuming, steam or heat treatments and insecticides. The insecticides are commercial products requiring special equipment and training.

If you have multiple complaints in different areas of the hotel it is strongly recommended the entire hotel be inspected, and treated as necessary.

## For more information:

University of Minnesota Extension

[www.bedbugs.umn.edu](http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu)

<http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/Hotel/index.htm>

<http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/Homeowners/index.htm>