

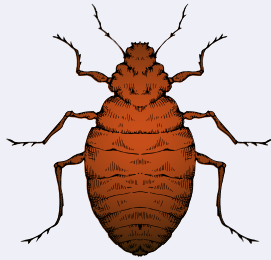
BED BUG FACT SHEET

HOW DO BED BUGS END UP IN ALASKA?

Bed bugs live wherever people do. People often pick up bed bugs or bed bug eggs while traveling and then carry them to hotels, homes and environments in their luggage and clothing. Bed bugs can live up to several months or even a year without food or water, and can withstand temperatures below zero for many days.

WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They do not transmit diseases, but their bites can leave itchy red welts on their victims. Adult bed bugs appear reddish-brown and have a flattened, oval shape. They are wingless and look about the size of an apple seed. They are big enough to be seen, but they hide in cracks in furniture, floors, walls, suitcases or clothing. Newly hatched nymphs look translucent and become brown when they molt. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become brighter red.



WHAT DOES A BED BUG BITE FEEL AND LOOK LIKE?

Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but they may turn into large, itchy skin welts. These wounds do not have a red spot in the center like flea bites. Some people don't develop welts at all and can carry bugs without knowing it.

ARE BED BUGS DANGEROUS?

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

HOW DOES A HOME BECOME INFESTED WITH BED BUGS?

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes unknowingly in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST BED BUGS?

- Inspect used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into your home.
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into your home.
- Always wash clothing and bedding immediately after returning from a trip.

WHEN YOU STAY IN A HOTEL OR SOME OTHER PLACE OF LODGING, FOLLOW THESE PRECAUTIONS:

- Store your suitcases on luggage racks or in the bathroom.
- After check-in, look for bed bugs behind the headboard and pull back the bed sheets to look for blood smears or little black spots (bed bug excrement).
- Check the seams of the mattress and box springs as well.
- If you see any evidence of bugs, ask for another room.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY HOME IS INFESTED WITH BED BUGS?

You may notice itchy skin welts or see the bed bugs themselves. You may also notice small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings on linens or bed spreads. It is often hard to see them because they hide in or near beds, furniture, and in cracks in the walls.

HOW CAN I GET RID OF BED BUGS?

Non-chemical eradication methods like vacuuming, steaming, laundering and sealing mattresses in plastic can help, but these methods usually do not completely eradicate a bed bug population. Also, bed bugs have become resistant to some types of insecticides, making it difficult to get rid of them. For this reason, you will probably need to consult a licensed pest control company, which should:

- Inspect your home to confirm the presence of bed bugs.
- Find and eliminate their hiding places.
- Treat your home with special cleaning and/or pesticides if necessary.
- Make return visits to make sure bed bugs are gone.

Be sure you see or check the license of the exterminator you hire. For information, contact the Alaska Pesticide Control Program at 800-478-2577 or <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/pest/index.htm>.

ARE PESTICIDES SAFE TO USE IN MY HOME?

Talk with a professional exterminator about the safe use of pesticides and make sure he/she:

- Uses the least toxic pesticide
- Follows instructions and warnings on product labels
- Advises you about staying out of treated rooms and when it is safe to reenter
- Treats mattresses and sofas by applying small amounts of pesticides on seams only. Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of mattresses or sofas.

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DO I HAVE IF I SUSPECT AN INFESTATION IN MY HOME?

First find the bed bugs. Use a bright flashlight to look for bugs or their dark droppings in bedroom furniture. You can use a hot hair dryer to force them out of hiding spaces and cracks. Also check these areas of your home:

- Behind your headboard
- In the seams and tufts of your mattress and inside the box spring
- Along bedroom baseboard cracks
- In and around nightstands
- In, on, under and behind other bedroom items like window and door casings, pictures, moldings, nearby furniture, loose wallpaper, cracks in plaster and partitions, and other clutter.

Second, clean areas where bed bugs are likely to hide.

- Wash bedding, linens, curtains, rugs, carpets, and clothes in hot water and dry them on the highest dryer setting to kill any remaining bugs. Soak delicate clothes in warm water with lots of laundry soap for several hours before rinsing them.
- Scrub mattress seams with a stiff brush to remove bed bugs and their eggs.
- Vacuum mattresses, bed frames, nearby furniture, floors and carpets. Pay special attention to cracks and open spaces. Immediately after vacuuming, put the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag and throw it away in an outdoor container.
- If you find bed bugs on a mattress, cover it with a waterproof, zippered mattress cover labeled "allergen rated" or "for dust mites." Keep the cover on for at least one year.
- If your box spring is infested, seal it inside a vinyl

box spring cover for at least one year. If no cover is available, throw the box spring away.

- Throw away infested items or clutter that can't be cleaned. Make sure the items are sealed tightly in plastic garbage bags before placing them in an outside container.
- Repair cracks in plaster and loose wallpaper.

Finally, be cautious about using pesticides yourself.

Pesticides can be harmful to people and pets. If a licensed exterminator recommends pesticides, follow these guidelines:

- Only use pesticides clearly labeled for bed bug extermination. Never use a cockroach spray, ant spray, or any other pesticide that does not list bed bugs on the label.
- Follow label instructions exactly.
- Never spray pesticides on top of mattresses or sofas, or in areas where children are present.
- Never purchase or use a product without a manufacturer's label and never buy pesticides from street vendors.
- Avoid "insecticide bombs" and "foggers" in your home. These products can spread harmful chemicals throughout your home

HOW CAN I KEEP MY FURNITURE FROM INFESTING SOMEONE ELSE'S HOME?

Never resell or donate infested furniture. If you throw infested furniture away, cut or poke holes in its upholstery so others will not want it, or tape a sign that says, "Infested with Bed Bugs" on it.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Several online sources focus on various methods of preventing and getting rid of bed bugs, such as

<http://www.bed-bug.org/>

<http://bedbugger.com>

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vector/bed-bug-guide.pdf>

To report an infestation in hotels, motels or other accommodations in Alaska, contact the Division of Environmental Health, the Food Safety and Sanitation Program, at (907) 269-7501.



State of Alaska
Department of Health
and Social Services
Division of Public Health
<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/>
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