

Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are back

Bed bug populations dropped dramatically during the mid-1900s. Now Oregon, along with many other states and most countries, is seeing them reappear.

- Since the 1940s, bed bugs have developed resistance to pesticides once used to control them.
- For the last several decades, there has not been a focus on the science or real-life experience of dealing with bed bugs.
- People travel more often now, and to places farther away. Bed bugs find our sleeping areas by getting on luggage, clothing or other belongings.



What should I know about bed bugs?

- Bed bugs feed on human blood. They are not known to spread disease.
- Effects from bed bug bites can range from no mark at all to a red, swollen, itchy and irritated bite mark. It's rare, but if you scratch the bitten area it may lead to a bacterial infection. In extremely rare cases, people who are very allergic to the bites can have:
 - » Inflammation, or
 - » Infection of the lymph nodes and a severe life-threatening reaction.
- Bed bugs and their bites can create stress for people who live in infested homes. People say they have anxiety, can't sleep and feel like bugs are crawling all over them. People also say they feel ashamed, even though bed bugs are not related to personal flaws or social class.
- Seniors and people who live with conditions that limit their physical abilities may find the physical demands of dealing with bed bugs too much to handle on their own. For example, to inspect, monitor and prepare their homes for treatment may be too much.
- Once bed bugs get established, they are complicated and often expensive to control.
- Treatment of the problem may seem overwhelming.

How do I prevent bed bugs?

- Vacuum and clean regularly with soap and water. Eliminate clutter. Look for these, as you clean:
 - » Bed bugs
 - » Bed bug eggs
 - » Bed bug molting – rusty-colored spots and outer skeletons bed bugs shed when they molt (see photo).
- Do a visual check of your sleeping area. Check the mattress, box spring, bed frame and bedding with a flashlight. Pull back the sheets and mattress pad cover to check for bed bugs on the folds and seams.
- Check cracks and crevices in the following:
 - » Furniture
 - » Floorboards
 - » Baseboards
 - » Windows
 - » Door frames
 - » Light switch plates
 - » Electrical outlets
- Remove drawers and check:
 - » Inside
 - » Top and bottom
 - » Hinges
 - » In holes
 - » Tops of screws
- Use caulk to seal areas where possible or appropriate.
- Check all used furniture before you bring it into your home. Avoid mattresses and furniture left out or in the garbage.
- When traveling, do not set luggage on or near the bed; instead, use the hallway or bathtub. Do a visual check of your sleeping area as noted above. Inspect your suitcase before you leave. Ask lodging staff about their bed bug history, prevention and control policies.
- If you think you were in an area with bed bugs, wash and dry your clothes on the hottest setting as soon as you get home. High heat for at least 20 minutes will kill adults and eggs. If you can't clean your clothes right when you get home, store them in a sealed plastic bag until you can.



Bed bug molting



What should I do if I find bed bugs?

Don't panic. Bed bugs are hard to get rid of but not impossible. There is no need to feel ashamed or embarrassed. Anyone can have bed bugs. It's important to let others know who are, or recently have been, in your home. Also, let property owners or managers know if you are visiting or live in a multi-unit setting. Examples are an apartment, dorm, residential care facility or shelter. Follow the steps below if you think you have bed bugs.

1. Make sure you have bed bugs, not fleas, carpet beetles or ticks. Trap a bug and contact your local Oregon State University county extension office for help (see the website on page 4). Visual guides available online also help to identify bed bugs. Check the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and National Pesticide Information Center links on page 4.
2. Follow the tips in the "How do I prevent bed bugs?" section on page 2 to know where to start to look for bed bugs. Vacuum and clean to reduce the number of bugs. Change the vacuum bag after each use. Put the used vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag before you put it in the trash. That way, the bugs can't crawl out and re-infest the area.
3. Wash and dry bedding on the hottest setting often. Remember to wash the laundry container as well.
4. Pull beds away from the walls. Keep the bedding from touching the floor. Bed bugs can crawl from the walls and floor to your bed. Sticky traps and special cups prevent bed bugs from climbing up the bedposts to the box spring and mattress.
5. Put box springs and mattresses in covers specially designed to keep bed bugs out.
6. Consider hiring a licensed, responsible pest management professional with a history of using integrated pest management (IPM) to deal with bed bugs. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) regulates pest control companies. Check the [ODA website](#) to find licensed pest control companies. Also, go there to find out if a pest control company has a history of violations.



What should I know about pesticides?

- It is not safe to spray your body with insect repellents (such as DEET) before you go to sleep. Insect repellents are not meant to be trapped on your skin for long periods. Call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222, right away if you think your health is affected from doing this.
- If you use a pesticide in bedrooms and sleeping areas make sure it states it is for indoor use. The use of outdoor pesticides inside your home puts people and pets at risk for health problems.
- If you use pesticides that doesn't state it is for bed bugs use it could create a bigger problem by making the bed bugs:
 - » Resistant to chemicals and harder to control, or
 - » Forced to hide in even harder-to-reach places.

- Use the U.S. EPA bed bug pesticide database on page 4 to search for products registered for use on bed bugs.
- Look for the EPA registration number. This will tell you:
 - » The product is legal.
 - » The EPA reviewed it for safety and effectiveness.
- Avoid bug bombs or foggers. This method is not effective at reaching cracks, crevices and hidden spaces where bed bugs hide.
- Use treatments that directly target areas where you have seen bed bugs or where they would commonly be found. Keep people and pets out of treated rooms until it is safe to re-enter. If you have to wait before you re-enter the room, the label will tell you how long you need to wait.
- Contact the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) at 1-800-858-7378 to discuss:
 - » Precautions specific to your product, or
 - » Other concerns you may have about using pesticides.
- To report a pesticide incident that has impacted people, animals, or the environment, call the Pesticide Analytic and Response Center at 503-986-6470.

Where can I get find out more?

Oregon Public Health Division

healthoregon.org/pesticide

Community Alliance of Tenants

(Repairs – Keeping Your Rental Home Healthy and Safe)

<https://www.oregoncat.org/know-your-rights-1>

National Center for Healthy Housing

[https://nchh.org/resource-library/Intro to Bed Bugs in Apartments and Shelters.pdf](https://nchh.org/resource-library/Intro_to_Bed_Bugs_in_Apartments_and_Shelters.pdf)

National Pesticide Information Center

<http://npic.orst.edu/pest/bedbug.html>

Oregon Department of Agriculture

<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/programs/IPPM/InsectsSpiders/Pages/BedBugs.aspx>

Oregon State University County Extension Service

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/pests-weeds-diseases/insects/bedbugs-growing-problem-everywhere>

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

<https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>



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