

I Have Bed Bugs, Now What?



Now that you know you have bed bugs, there are certain steps that you can take to help eliminate them. Vacuuming and hot laundering can be very helpful in killing any bed bugs on sheets, pillowcases, or in areas near the bed. It is important that a professional do additional removal, as “do-it-yourself” pesticides can merely aggravate them and cause them to spread.

STEPS TO TAKE

1. Contact a Professional

The complete elimination of bed bugs requires highly trained and licensed individuals knowledgeable in bed bug biology, behavior and the proper use of pesticides. There is little chance that you will be able to eliminate the problem on your own.

- Most commercially available pesticides are simply repellents and may only spread the bed bugs to remote areas and make the problem much more difficult to solve. Because of this, it will be hard for you to be thorough when treating the bugs.
- While chemical remedies should only be handled by professionals, there are many non-chemical measures you can take to help eliminate the problem and speed up the results of your bed bug program. These techniques are discussed below.

2. Remove Bed Bugs

Just because you have bed bugs does not mean that you have to wait for a professional to kill them.

- Crush them with a rag (although this may stain surfaces) or remove them with a vacuum.
- Regularly inspect and vacuum your mattress and box spring to reduce large numbers of bed bugs quickly.
- It is important to note that bed bugs can readily infest vacuums. To reduce the likelihood of the vacuum becoming infested, you should choose a

vacuum that empties into a vacuum bag instead of a filter. A vacuum bag can be easily disposed of while a canister is difficult to completely empty and eggs can easily lodge in places that you cannot see.

- Avoid using vacuum attachments that have brushes or bristles. Instead, use the open end of the hose.
- Vacuuming up a small amount of talcum/baby powder before you start vacuuming and just after you finish may also help reduce the survival rate of some of the bugs that are vacuumed up.
- As soon as you are done vacuuming, the vacuum bag should be tied shut in a trash bag and discarded outside of the home. You should also inspect the housing of the vacuum where the bag attaches to the hose as some bugs may escape the vacuum bag.
- If you have a bagless vacuum, the contents of the canister should be emptied into a trash bag and tied shut. The canister should then be washed to remove any remaining bed bugs or eggs. *If you are concerned about the vacuum becoming infested then you should not follow this recommendation.*

3. Eliminate Clutter

Clutter is a bed bug’s best friend and a pest control professional’s worst enemy. Clutter provides an infinite number of areas for bed bugs to hide and creates areas that cannot be effectively treated. These areas are a safe haven for bed bugs. Cluttered areas can cause the complete failure of a bed bug control program. If cluttered conditions persist, your pest control professional may only be able to reduce the number of bed bugs and never completely eliminate the problem. Do your best to eliminate clutter.

Do Not Store Items Under the Bed Unless Necessary.
Items stored under the bed give bed bugs additional undisturbed areas to hide protected from any chemical treatments. If necessary use smooth, plastic storage totes with a tight fitting lid.

4. Launder Items Regularly

Linens should be laundered regularly (preferably weekly). Even if you do not see any bed bugs on the items, female bed bugs drop eggs randomly as they roam. These eggs are very tiny and will not be noticed on your linens. Washing the linens will remove and kill these eggs. Likewise, if your couch is infested, you can also remove the cushion covers (if possible) and launder them as well. *Please be aware that bed bugs have demonstrated to be able to survive a cold wash cycle even with detergent present.*

DID YOU KNOW?

Heat is deadly to bed bugs. Putting items in the dryer for 30 minutes on the high heat setting, then washing with hot water, and then drying once more will normally kill them.

5. Install Mattress and Box Spring Encasements

There are many mattress and box spring encasements available to the consumer; however most of these encasements have not been designed specifically for use with bed bugs. Instead most encasements available to the consumer are designed to either protect the bed from becoming stained or provide relief for people with allergies to dust mites. This does not mean that they will be effective for bed bugs. It is very important that the encasement you purchase has been specifically designed for bed bugs with scientific data to support the effectiveness of the product.

- Once beds are encased, any bugs that may be trapped within the encasement will be unable to escape or feed and will eventually die.
- In addition, once the beds are protected, other bed bugs cannot penetrate the encasement and thus cannot reinfest the mattress or box spring. Instead, bed bugs are restricted to the surface of the encasement where they are easy to spot and remove.
- Encasements can be a very useful pro-active tool to help aid in the early detection of bed bugs should they be introduced into a dwelling that was not previously infested.
- It is important that the encasements are kept in good condition. Any rips in the encasements will allow bed bugs to enter and exit the encasement, rendering them ineffective.

6. Do Not Change Where You Sleep

Once people identify that their bed is infested, they will often begin sleeping in a different bedroom or on the couch. If you move to a different area of the home to sleep, the bed bugs will find you. Changing where you sleep is likely to promote the movement of bugs throughout the structure and make it more difficult to eliminate the infestation. Even if you move out of your home, you risk bringing bed bugs with you and infesting the new area. Upon returning home they will be waiting to greet you. Remember, bed bugs can survive many months, and in some cases up to a year or more, without feeding. Although it sounds like a grim choice, it is best to continue sleeping in the infested area until the bed bugs are eliminated.

7. Do Not Immediately Throw Items Away

For many people, the immediate reaction to a bed bug infestation is to throw the infested items away. This is unnecessary and could possibly make the problem worse.

- As items are carried through the home to be discarded, bed bugs can fall off of the item and be spread throughout the home to uninfested areas.
- You are eliminating the harborage for these bed bugs and disturbing them, which may cause the bed bugs to find other places to live and spread the problem.
- Discarded items are often picked up by other people, spreading the problem to new areas.

In some circumstances when the item is in poor condition or is highly infested, discarding the item is the best option. *This is best left to a professional so that the item can be discarded properly without spreading the problem.*

