

Bed Bugs and Beyond

By: Mardi Roberts

The first time I heard the words “Bed Bugs” was in a term of endearment that my grandmother would use when tucking me in bed: “*Sleep tight and don’t let the Bed Bugs bite.*” Little did I know that Bed Bugs were *real!*

Because of inspections we have to do, I have had to learn way more about Bed Bugs than I ever wanted to.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a class on Bed Bugs put on by a national pest-control company. Here are some quick facts about Bed Bugs that I learned:

- 👉 The earliest book about getting rid of Bed Bugs was published in England in 1730.
- 👉 Increased travel, loss of pesticides, recycled furniture, and changes in the way pest control is performed have all contributed to the increase (dare I say explosion) of Bed Bugs.
- 👉 Bed bugs have been found in many mattress delivery trucks. Think about this—they take old mattresses (that could have Bed Bugs) away as one of their services.
- 👉 During the World War II era, one in three households had Bed Bugs.
- 👉 Today, one out of five people either has Bed Bugs or knows someone who has Bed Bugs.
- 👉 The stigma that Bed Bugs like dirty surroundings is not true. Bed Bugs are sanitation independent. They can be located in a spotless, million-dollar home or in a hoarder’s filthy living quarters.
- 👉 Bed Bugs have a 4 to 16 week life cycle and lay one to five eggs a day that hatch in six to 10 days. One bed bug can lay 200-500 eggs during its life cycle.
- 👉 They can live up to 70 days without a (blood meal) feeding and live ten months if blood is available.
- 👉 Forty bugs could produce 5,095 bugs in six months.
- 👉 Bed Bugs are temperature sensitive and temperature dependent.
- 👉 They prefer non-furry animals.
- 👉 Bed Bugs hide during the day. Their peak activity is 2:00-3:00A.M.
- 👉 Travel distance of a typical bed bug is 10-100’ each night and they can move about as fast as a person walking slowly.
- 👉 They are excellent hitchhikers.

- 👉 They feed in 3 to 15 minutes, usually every three to seven days. Most return to hiding within 30 minutes of feeding.
- 👉 Bed Bugs have not proven to be a disease vector, but can harbor 30 human pathogens. There have been documented cases of anemia due to severe bed bug bites.
- 👉 There is actually a disorder called PBBSD (Post Bed Bug Stress Disorder) that causes emotional stress, sleeplessness, and anxiety.
- 👉 People exhibit different reactions to bed bug bites; some react severely, while others not at all.
- 👉 Bed Bugs orient on heat (most important cue), carbon dioxide, and other body odors.
- 👉 Dogs are 90% accurate in detecting Bed Bugs. They can canvas a room in three to five minutes.

Preventing Bugs

- 👉 Education is the best tool. Maintenance staff and residents should be educated.
- 👉 Conduct proactive inspections.
- 👉 Implement preventative measures such as mattress encapsulation and vacuuming wall voids.
- 👉 Some management companies have language in their leases or lease addendums that state all clothes purchased second-hand must be “cooked” in a machine they have on-site. I have heard of Packtite (<http://www.packtite.com/>), a container used to heat items with a duration long enough to kill Bed Bugs, being shared among multiple buildings.
- 👉 I have also heard of an owner who will be building a “hot” room in newly constructed properties that all furniture will have to go through before the resident can move in.
- 👉 Climbug™ is a good deterrence tool. It is a plastic disk that is placed under beds and other furniture legs.

Where Bed Bugs Like to Hide Out

Bed Bugs like cracks, crevices, beds, furniture, seams, tufts, wall fixtures, personal belongings, phones, clocks, lampshades, and even hangers.

Getting Rid of Bed Bugs

Heat is the most effective means of eradicating Bed Bugs and their eggs. Heat does not require direct contact. Bed Bugs have not become immune to heat. There are chemical products to get rid of Bed Bugs, but I am not an expert so I am not addressing it.

When You Travel

Bed, Bath and Beyond sells plastic suitcase covers.

Before traveling, access <http://bedbugregistry.com/> to learn if the hotel you intend to stay in has been reported for Bed Bugs. The Bed Bug Registry is a free, public database of user-submitted Bed Bug reports from across the United States and Canada.

When entering your hotel room, the first thing you want to do is check between the mattress and the headboard. Do not set your suitcase on any soft surfaces such as the bed or chairs. It is best to unpack on a hard surface or even better—the bathtub. The suitcase stands provided by many hotels, is probably the worst place to set your suitcase on.

When you get home, it is best to unpack in a spare bathroom.

When We Inspect Properties

You may see some of us wear painters' booties. Painters' booties are different from surgical booties in that they have little rubber spots on the bottom and are less slippery. Bed Bugs love the crevices in tennis shoes or work boots.

I try not to sit down on any furniture, lean on walls, or brush against beds or upholstered furniture.

Special Mention

I want to give credit to my Director, Tim Sovold, for coming up with the title of this article.

Disclaimer: The author doesn't claim to be an expert or even a scientist, but she has some experience and thoughts on the topic.