



## BED BUGS

### WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

Bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed on the blood of warm-blooded animals, like humans. When they hatch, they are about the size of a poppy seed. Adult bed bugs grow to about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch long. They can be almost white just after molting. Then they are tan, deep brown, or burnt orange. After feeding they may have a dark red or black mass in the center of their body. When disturbed they seek shelter in dark crevices or cracks. Bed bugs are most active in the middle of the night, but may come out during the day if they are hungry.

If you find bed bugs do not wait to treat them. Bed bugs can live for months without a meal so treatment is necessary to get rid of them.



### WHAT CAN I DO TO AVOID OR GET RID OF BED BUGS?

Call a professional extermination service to help if you have an infestation. It is **very hard** to get rid of them yourself. But there are things **you** can do to help keep bed bugs from infesting or spreading:

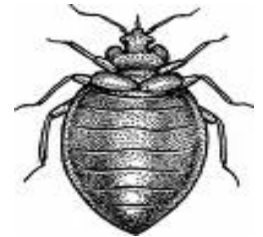
- **Do not pick up furniture that people have thrown away.** If you buy things from discount or thrift stores, inspect them carefully for signs of bed bugs.
- **Extreme heat can kill bed bugs.** Clothing can be treated by heating it to 97-99 degrees. You can do this by tightly wrapping small items in black plastic and placing them in the hot sun for several hours. You can also wash clothing and then dry it in the 'hot' cycle of the clothes dryer. If clothing cannot be washed, you can still run it through the dryer's hot cycle.
- **Extreme cold can also kill bed bugs.** Wrap delicate items in plastic and put them in the freezer for several hours. Or outside if it is colder than 32 degrees.
- **If you have loose or peeling wallpaper you should take it off or seal it down.** Do the same for flaking paint, moldings, and baseboards.
- **Scrub infested items** with a dry or soapy scrub brush to get the eggs off and vacuum thoroughly when done.
- **Take out drawers and turn furniture over** to look for hiding spaces. Scrub these places and vacuum thoroughly when done.
- **Sprinkle Borax around edges and corners.** Bedbugs will eat it and die.
- **Vacuum often and avoid clutter** in the house so bed bugs have fewer spaces to hide.
- **Vacuum using the hose** along all of the hard to reach areas where bed bugs hide. (crevices, baseboards, molding, drapery, upholstered furniture, etc)

- **Remove the vacuum bag** (or empty the canister) right away. Put it in a plastic bag, seal it and take outside to a garbage or dumpster.
- **Keep clean clothes and bedding in sealed plastic bags** to keep the bugs from getting at them again.

## HOW DO I STOP BED BUGS FROM GETTING INTO MY BED?

Bed bugs live in mattresses, bed frames, pillows, blankets and sheets. They are active at night, so it is important to keep them from getting into your bed and biting you.

- Pull your bed frame away from the wall and make sure that bedding (blankets, sheets, pillows) does not touch the floor.
- Tape up holes or tears in the mattress or pillows with strong tape (like duct tape). Buy hypoallergenic zippered covers for your mattress and pillows. These covers are made to trap dust-mites. The weave of the fabric is very tight and will keep bed bugs from getting into, or out of your mattress and pillows.
- Put your bed's legs in cups of soapy water or mineral oil **or**
- Coat the legs of your bed with petroleum jelly (Vaseline). Remember to put something down on the floor to catch the dripping petroleum jelly **or**
- Put double sided tape on your bed's legs **or**
- Put your bed's legs in metal cans or glass jars because bed bugs cannot climb metal or glass.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY INFESTED FURNITURE?

Some furniture can be treated for bed bugs by professional exterminators. If the infestation is bad enough it is best to throw it away. **DO NOT** throw away infested furniture where other people can take it. This can make the bugs spread more.

- Break the furniture up in pieces. Cut open the mattress, cushions or upholstery, snap the legs off of chairs and couches.
- The broken up furniture should be put in sealed, plastic bags in a dumpster that has a lid and can be locked by the landlord, or picked up by removal services immediately.

**Keep your eyes out for signs of bed bugs!** Getting rid of them takes time. Bed bugs can live a long time and they probably have laid eggs which will hatch. Expect to keep things covered and keep doing the other things you are doing to stop them for at least a year. **You need to keep at it and keep working with a professional exterminator. Follow the steps for treatment until they tell you that the infestation is gone.**

To find other Legal Aid Society materials, including any fact sheets mentioned in this document, go to [www.lawhelpmn.org/LASMfactsheets](http://www.lawhelpmn.org/LASMfactsheets).

*Minneapolis Legal Aid – CLE  
MN Legal Services Coalition  
2324 University Avenue W- Suite 101B  
St. Paul, MN 55114*

*Don't use this fact sheet if it is more than 1 year old.  
Write us for updates, a fact sheet list, or alternate formats.  
Fact Sheets aren't a complete answer to a legal problem.  
See a lawyer for advice.*