



Bedbugs

Why are bedbugs a pest?

Bedbugs are not considered a public health pest officially, but they can be an unpleasant and persistent nuisance due to their feeding habits. Bedbugs draw blood from their hosts by piercing the skin. It is the bedbug's saliva which causes the redness, swelling and itching. Some people could have an allergic reaction which is a concern for those at risk of anaphylaxis. Unlike mosquitoes and ticks there are no confirmed cases of bedbugs spreading diseases from one human to another, even though the bedbug possesses all the correct tools to do so!



Signs of bedbugs

The following are signs that you may have a bedbug infestation:

Sightings - adult bedbugs are roughly apple pip size and may vary slightly in colour. After a feed they will appear red / purple. Hungry bedbugs will appear opaque. You may find adults near the food sources for example in mattress seams, corners and buttons. You may also be able to see bedbugs in sockets, cracks and crevices, on curtains or along skirting boards and carpet edges.

Bites - bedbugs are nocturnal creatures and will feed when humans are asleep at night.



These bites will be red, slightly swollen, itchy (an anti itch cream such as calamine lotion may help) and may appear in clusters.

Staining - bedbugs deposit their faeces after every meal. This will appear as dark brown stains on bedding especially around the edges of mattresses and bed frames where they are mainly found. This will be more pronounced with heavier infestations.

Blood - spots of blood may be found in bedding. This is caused from the bedbugs feeding or from the crushing of the insect.

How to prevent an infestation

Bedbug infestations are on the rise, mainly due to the increase of worldwide travel. It is mainly places where people are very transient such as hotels and hostels that tend to report repeat infestations. Bedbugs are excellent travelers and holidaymakers can often carry infested suitcases back and infest their homes.

By following these tips you may be able to prevent an infestation:

- Store any suitcases and bags off the ground and away from your bed when staying in any multi occupied establishments abroad or in the UK
- If you have travelled and stayed in public accommodation then store your suitcase in an isolated area until you or a qualified pest technician can thoroughly inspect it
- When buying second hand furniture inspect it thoroughly looking for insects within the seams, cracks and crevices.
- Vacuuming the mattress and fabrics of the infested areas may help reduce the number of insects and eggs. The vacuum needs to be emptied outside into a sealed bag and disposed of in the outside bin. This will not prevent bedbugs but will help control numbers.

Key areas to look for bedbugs:

- Tufts, seams, buttons & folds of mattresses;
- Box springs, bed frames and covers;
- Couches, chairs, cushions and curtains;
- Window and door moldings;
- Behind loose wallpaper and pictures;
- Cracks in walls or hardwood flooring;
- Under carpets along walls (tack strip);
- Wall voids (outlets & switch plates); and
- Luggage, boxes and other portable items.

Whenever evidence of bed bugs is found, neighbouring rooms and other areas of the premises should also be checked to establish the full extent of the infestation.

Preparation before treatment

Bedbug treatment will involve considerable disruption, and is likely to involve multiple treatments. The amount of time taken and the number of treatments you will require - and hence the cost – will increase markedly with the degree of clutter in the environment.

Laundry

- Beds must be completely stripped down before insecticide treatment, with all sheets, duvets, blankets, valances and other bedding placed in a bin liner and either laundered or professionally cleaned.
- Curtains, soft furnishings and any clothing that may provide potential harbourage's should also be removed for thorough washing or dry cleaning.
- To kill all bed bug stages, materials need to be washed in hot water (>49C for >10min.) with soap or detergent before drying in a hot dryer (>60C for >20min.)

Vacuuming

Although their eggs tend to be stuck too tightly to harbourage surfaces to be easily removed, vacuuming exposed surfaces or resting sites is valuable in removing a significant number of nymphs and adult bedbugs

Using a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtered vacuum will ensure the many allergens associated with bed bugs and their debris are also removed.

Vacuum bags should also be removed immediately, sealed tightly inside a plastic bag and either incinerated or placed in the normal rubbish collection.

In particular, in bedrooms:

- All pictures and other wall hangings should be removed from wall
- Headboards should be removed from the wall or dismantled to allow thorough treatment to cracks, crevices and voids.
- Carpets should be pulled back from the wall so that any voids beneath baseboard mouldings can be treated.
- Curtains should be removed from the window and taken away for separate treatment (either in a dryer or steam cleaned).
- Wall fixtures, such as mounted lamps, should be detached to vacuum and treat voids behind them with residual dust.

Control

You should seek a professional pest controller. They should be a member of the British Pest Control Association (call 01332 294 288 or visit www.bpca.org.uk) or the National Pest Technician Association (call 01949 81133 or visit www.npta.org.uk). When seeking the services of a private contractor you should always obtain a minimum of three quotes. This will allow you to compare service and price.