

Don't let the bed bugs bite

Bed bugs have become more common in the U.S. in recent years. Common pesticides used to kill bed bugs may not work as well as they once did. The bugs may be getting “resistant,” which means they can survive pesticides used on them. This resistance, along with increased travel by people and lack of knowledge about how to get rid of them, are likely to blame for the rise in these pests.

Bed bugs feed on blood so they are attracted to people and animals. They also come out at night, so the bed is the best place for them to find their meal.

Check for bed bugs

If you want to keep bed bugs out, you'll need to check your home, as well as hotels while traveling. Look for small, reddish brown bugs about the size of an apple seed. Use a flashlight to get a good look. Check:

- Under and all around the mattress, box spring and bed frame
- Seams and small crevices where they like to hide — bed bugs can get into cracks as thin as a credit card
- Nightstands and other furniture near beds

Do I have bed bugs?

Even if you don't see any bugs, watch for signs that they are hiding in your home and biting people. The most common signs of bed bugs include:

- Small, reddish spots on bed sheets or mattresses
- Small round, dark spots on the bed (may look like ink spots)
- Tiny eggs, egg shells or light yellow skins



How to prevent them

Bed bugs have been found in clean homes that are well cared for. They can be hard to keep out. These tips can help you keep them away:

- Check for bed bugs when you travel and don't put your suitcase on the bed.
- When you get home from a trip, immediately wash your travel clothes in hot water.
- Keep luggage outside when you get home and vacuum it thoroughly. Empty the vacuum contents into a plastic bag, seal it and throw it in the garbage outside.

If you find a bug that might be a bed bug, tape it to a piece of paper so you can show it to a pest control expert. Call a pest control company right away. If you live in an apartment or rental home, contact your landlord about what to do.

The Environmental Protection Agency has information about getting rid of them on their website. Visit www.epa.gov/bedbugs.