

GETTING RID OF BED BUGS

If you live in an apartment building

- Call your landlord or the building management company about the problem. Adjacent apartments, at minimum, should be checked and treated as well as your own apartment.
- Discuss with your landlord the need to call a licensed Pest Control company to schedule an appointment for an inspection and treatment.

Find out where the bed bugs are hiding in your home

Use a bright flashlight to look for bed bugs or their dark droppings in bedroom furniture. Or use a hot hair dryer or a thin playing card to force them out of hiding spaces and cracks.

Check:

- Behind your headboard.
- In the seams and tufts of your mattress and inside the box spring.
- Along bedroom baseboard cracks.
- In and around nightstands.
- Other bedroom items, including window and door casings, pictures, moldings, nearby furniture, loose wallpaper, cracks in plaster and partitions and clutter.



Clean areas where bed bugs are likely to hide

- Clean bedding, linens, curtains, rugs, carpets and clothes. To kill bed bugs, wash items in hot water and dry them on the highest dryer setting. Soak delicate clothes in warm water with lots of laundry soap for several hours before rinsing. Wool items, plush toys, shoes and many other items can be placed into a hot dryer for 30 minutes to get rid of bed bugs.
- Scrub mattress seams with a stiff brush to dislodge bed bugs and their eggs.
- Vacuum mattresses, bed frames, nearby furniture, floors and carpets. Pay special attention to cracks and open spaces. Immediately after vacuuming, put the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag, and dispose of it in an outdoor container.
- If you find bed bugs on a mattress, cover it with a waterproof, zippered mattress cover labeled “allergen rated,” or “for dust mites.” Keep the cover on for at least one year.
- If your box spring is infested, seal it inside a vinyl box spring cover for at least one year.
- If no cover is available for your mattress or box spring, throw the box spring and/or mattress away for curbside pick-up from Arlington County Environmental Services. Please place a large note on the item stating “DO NOT REUSE”, so your fellow neighbors don’t pick it up second hand.
- Dispose of infested items that cannot be cleaned and get rid of clutter. Seal tightly in a plastic garbage bag and discard in an outside container.
- Repair cracks in plaster and repair or remove loose wallpaper.

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Be very cautious about using pesticides yourself

Pesticides can be hazardous to people and pets. If you choose to use a pesticide, or a licensed pest control professional suggests you use one, follow these precautions:

- Only use pesticides clearly labeled for bed bug extermination. Never use a cockroach spray, ant spray, or any other pesticide that does not list bed bugs on the label.
- Follow label instructions exactly.
- Never spray pesticides on top of mattresses or sofas, or in areas where children or pets are present.
- Never purchase or use a product without a manufacturer's label and never buy pesticides from street vendors.
- Avoid using "insecticide bombs" and "foggers" in your home. These products can spread hazardous chemicals throughout your home, and not likely to be effective against bed bugs.

Is It Necessary To Use Pesticides To Get Rid Of Bed Bugs?

The best way to get rid of bed bugs is to clean, disinfect and eliminate their hiding places. Since bed bugs can live for several months without food and water, pest control professionals may use a pesticide. Talk with the professional about safe use of pesticides and make sure he/she:

- Uses the least toxic pesticide.
- Follows instructions and warnings on product labels.
- Advises you about staying out of treated rooms and when it is safe to reenter.
- Treats mattresses and sofas by applying small amounts of pesticides on seams only. Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of mattresses or sofa, or in areas where children or pets are present.

Adapted from New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

EPA Housing Manager information:

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/controlling/housing-mgr.htm>