

I Have Bed Bugs, Now What?

1. Contact a professional

The complete elimination of a bed bugs infestation requires highly trained and licensed individuals knowledgeable in bed bug biology, behavior, and the proper use of pesticides. There is little chance that you will be able to eliminate the problem on your own, and a risk of spreading the problem. Most pesticides available at retail stores are not designed, or completely effective for bed bugs. The use of these products (while they may kill some of the bed bugs), may only spread the bed bugs to remote areas and make the problem more difficult to solve. While chemical remedies should only be handled by professionals, there are non-pesticide measures you can take to help eliminate the problem and speed up the results of your bed bug program. These techniques are discussed here:

2. Remove the bed bugs: You can simply crush them with a paper towel or remove them with a vacuum. Regularly inspecting and vacuuming your mattress and box spring is a very effective way to reduce large numbers of bed bugs quickly. Avoid using vacuum attachments that have brushes or bristles (because bed bugs and eggs can attach). Use an open ended hose. Vacuum a bit of talcum/baby powder before the start and just after finishing will help reduce the survival rate of the bed bugs that are vacuumed up. After vacuuming, be sure to remove the vacuum bag, tie it shut in a trash bag, and discard it outside of the home.
3. Eliminate clutter: Clutter is a bed bug's best friend and a pest control operator's worst enemy. Clutter provides an infinite number of areas for bed bugs to hide and creates areas that cannot be effectively treated by the pest control operator. Cluttered areas can cause the complete failure of a bed bug control program. If cluttered conditions persist, the pest control operator may only be able to reduce the number of bed bugs and never completely eliminate the infestation. If you are planning to discard small items that may be infested, tightly bag the items before removing, and place the bag in an outside garbage can.
4. Do not store items under bed: This provides additional harborage for bed bugs to hide and protected from chemical treatments.
5. Launder items regularly: Heat is deadly to bed bugs. All stages of bed bugs can be killed by exposing them to temperatures in excess of 120 F for at least twenty minutes. Hot

laundering can be a highly effective method for dealing with any item that can be safely placed in a clothes dryer on high heat.

6. Install mattress and box spring encasements: There are many mattress and box spring encasements available to consumers. Make sure that the encasement that you purchase has been specifically designed for bed bugs and has scientific data to support the effectiveness of the product. Once beds are encased, any bed bug that may be trapped within the encasement will be unable to escape or feed and will eventually die. These encasement usually must be in place for 1 year.

7. Do not change where you sleep: Some people believe they can avoid bed bugs by sleeping in a different area of their home. Once people identify that their bed is infested, they will often begin to sleep in a different bedroom or on the sofa. Bed bugs have evolved to quickly locate potential hosts to feed on. If you move to a different area of the home to sleep, the bed bugs will find you. Changing where you sleep is likely to promote the movement of bed bugs throughout the structure and make it more difficult to eliminate the infestation. Remember, bed bugs can survive many months without feeding. Although it sounds like a grim choice, it is best to continue sleeping in the infested area using the population reduction methods described above, until the bed bugs are eliminated.

8. Do not throw furniture away: For many people, the immediate reaction to a bed bug infestation is to throw the infested furniture away. This is unnecessary and could possibly make the problem worse. As furniture is carried through the home to be discarded, bed bugs can fall off and be spread throughout the building to un-infested areas. Additionally, because you are eliminating harborage for these bed bugs and disturbing them, they will likely move and find other places to live and spread the problem. Lastly, discarded furniture items are often picked up by other people, thus spreading the problem to new areas.