

# Bed Bug Do's and Don'ts

- **DO take action immediately.** The longer you wait, the harder it will be to get rid of them.
  - **DO cover both your mattress and box springs** with a cover (encasement) made especially for bed bug protection. In the home, bed bug infestations usually start in the mattress or box springs. If there are bed bugs in the mattress or box springs, the cover will keep them from escaping and biting you, and if you cover a new bed, you'll keep bed bugs out and they will have fewer places to hide and lay eggs. It also makes it easier to inspect the mattress and box springs when they are covered.
  - **DO check your clothes and belongings** when you leave a suspected infested area. If you go into an infested situation, store your purse or backpack in a sealed plastic bag. Bring your own stool to sit on. Don't sit on upholstered furniture or beds. When you get home, put your dry clothes into a clothes dryer for 15 minutes on 'high' to kill hitchhiking bed bugs.
  - **DO ask visitors from an infested home to check their clothing** for hitchhiking bed bugs and keep their belongings in a sealed plastic bag.
- ! **DON'T panic.** Bed bugs are extremely annoying and stressful, but they do not transmit disease.
- ! **DON'T try to treat your home with pesticides yourself.** You may endanger yourself and your family and actually make your problem worse by causing bed bugs to scatter and spread to other rooms or apartments.
- ! **DON'T throw away all your furniture.** This won't solve the problem (bed bugs just move to the new bed), and it is very expensive.
- ! **DON'T sell or give away infested items.** If you put them out on the curb, clearly mark that they are contaminated with bed bugs.

! **DON'T bring bed bugs into your home.** Second hand furniture, electronics, clothing and other items can harbor bed bugs. Don't bring in furniture and mattresses from the street. It is more and more likely that these items will be infested with bed bugs. You can wash clothing and stuffed animals and then dry them on 'high' for 30 minutes. Without the help of a professional, you will not be able to eliminate bed bugs from furniture.

## WHEN YOU TRAVEL

- **Check your hotel room.** Look carefully at the bed and then at furniture and areas around the bed: the night stand, lamps, paintings, loose wallpaper, baseboards, electrical sockets, and if you can, the headboard. If you find bed bugs or their evidence, request to be moved and inspect that room also.
- **Keep your suitcase in the bathtub** or in a sealed plastic bag.
- **When you get home, open your suitcase outside** the house and put the contents of your luggage into a plastic bag. Check your luggage carefully with a bright light and magnifying glass before bringing it inside.
- **Wash everything you can.** Clean clothes don't have to be washed! Put the dry items into the dryer for 15 minutes on 'high'. Carefully inspect any other belongings you had with you.

**For more information:** go to the Contra Costa Health Services Department website:

<http://www.cchealth.org/bedbugs>

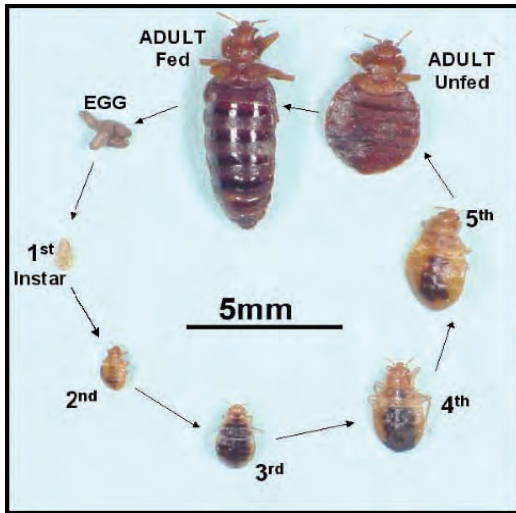
or call 925-313-6740

## CONTROLLING BED BUGS

- **Notify your landlord immediately.** You will NOT be able to get rid of bed bugs alone. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to get rid of them. Many landlords understand that bedbugs are a shared problem and will want to know about it as soon as possible.
- **Getting rid of bed bugs requires the combined efforts** of the tenant, landlord and qualified pest control company.
- **A clothes dryer is great for killing bed bugs.** You can kill all stages of bed bugs on dry clothing (or other dry items) by tumble drying them for 15 minutes on "high."
- **Carefully follow instructions provided by your landlord and/or the pest control company.** These instructions may include disposing of clutter, washing clothing and bedding and drying on 'high' for at least 30 minutes, sealing freshly laundered items in plastic bags, and removing belongings from the tops of dressers, night stands, and tables. **Be prepared for more than one treatment.** It may take multiple treatments over many weeks.



Adult bed bugs on a sheet showing typical staining. Photo by H.J. Harlan



Bed Bug Life Stages Photo by Stephen L. Doggett

### DESCRIPTION AND HABITS

- Bed bugs feed on the blood of humans and sometimes other warm-blooded animals, including pets.
- They are active mainly at night and hide during the day. They cannot fly or jump, but they can run quickly.
- Adult bed bugs are small, oval, flattened insects, smaller than an apple seed, but somewhat similar in color. After feeding, their bodies become longer and more rounded.
- Their whitish eggs are so tiny they are hard to see without a magnifying glass.
- Eggs hatch into tiny nymphs. As they grow, they shed their skin 5 times before reaching maturity.
- Bed bugs can survive for 3 to 5 months without feeding.

### WHERE BED BUGS HIDE

- Bed bugs can hide in almost any crack or crevice.
- At first, they hide in and around the bed, but as the infestation grows, they spread through the room.
- Look for bed bugs in places such as
  - ◊ Along seams in the mattress or box springs
  - ◊ In cracks & crevices in the headboard, bed frame, box springs, night stand, and other furniture
  - ◊ In cracks & crevices in the floor, walls, baseboards, windows, and doors
  - ◊ Behind pictures and other objects hanging on the wall.
- Bed bugs can also hide in purses, backpacks, luggage, clothing, books, and other items, which makes them easy to move around accidentally.

### SIGNS OF AN INFESTATION

- **Bites:** Some people develop itchy welts, but others have no reaction at all. Bites occur on any bare skin exposed while sleeping.
- **Dark rusty or reddish spotting or staining:** These spots of digested blood may be found on sheets, mattresses, walls, and other areas.
- **Live bugs, eggs, eggshells, and shed skins from growing nymphs.**

**Remember that bites alone do not mean a bed bug infestation.** Confirmation requires finding and identifying the bugs themselves.



Bed bugs and their fecal spots on the wall next to an electrical outlet

# DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE BED BUGS?



**Contra Costa County  
Bed Bug Task Force**

<http://www.cchealth.org/bedbugs>