

Facts about Bed Bugs for Cal Poly Residents

What is a bed bug?

Adult bed bugs are slightly smaller than a lady bug or about 3/8 of an inch long. They are reddish-brown in color with flat oval shaped bodies. Bed bugs feed on the blood of people and other warm blooded animals. They are nocturnal feeders who unlike lice or fleas don't live on hosts but rather in the "nests" of hosts (places you rest: beds, couches, etc). Bed bugs do not fly or leap but rather hide in dark crevices close to food sources (blood sources). The average lifespan for a bed bug is 12 to 18 months. Bed bugs can live for months without feeding. Bed bugs are spread by hitchhiking from areas of infestation on clothes, furniture, bedding, suitcases, and even backpacks. Bed bugs appear only to feed, which occurs every seven to ten days.



What is a hitch-hiking bed bug?

Bed bugs can easily travel on clothing, linens, furniture, and backpacks. Bed bugs are most common in places where people sleep. These places include hotels, motels, apartments, cruise ships and residence halls. Couch hopping and sleeping bags on the bedroom floor easily pick-up these hitch-hikers. Infestations of bed bugs do not necessarily indicate poor hygiene.

Can bed bugs hurt me?

For the most part, bed bugs are just plainly and simply creepy, but remain relatively harmless. The bites may cause an itchy welt; most people do not have allergic reactions to the bites. Like other insect bites, itching and scratching the bites can cause secondary infections and scarring. Bed bugs are not known to transmit any blood borne diseases such as HIV or AIDS.

More Information on the Reverse

Bed bugs CAN be controlled with vigilance, constant inspection, and treatment.

Do I have bed bugs?

Bed bug bites are identified by small welts similar to mosquito bites. Often these welts occur in rows of three or more and cause itching and discomfort. These bites may show up in the morning but typically take a few days to appear. If bed bugs are present, tiny dark excrement stains will be on sheets, pillowcases, and mattresses. Molted skins and egg shells may also be present, but look for the crawling or dead adults as well.

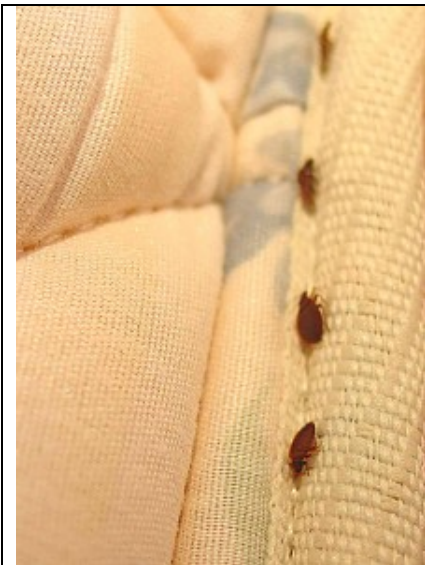
Examine areas around the bed and sleeping quarters for signs of bed bug activity. Bed bugs prefer areas around fabric, wood and paper. Check the folds or seams in bedding and linens. Check seams and corners on mattresses and mattress pads. Check bedroom furniture especially around the headboard and footboard paying special attention to corners and crevices. Check baseboards, moldings and carpet seams near and around the bed. Bed bugs often travel up so check areas above the level where you sleep. Check artwork and wall hangings, curtains, and walls. Look for any excrement spots, skin casings, or live bugs.

What if I have bed bugs?

If you see/find bed bugs, please save the items. Place the items in a Ziploc type plastic bag or tape it to a white piece of paper. Contact your Resident/Community Advisor, Coordinator of Student Development or Housing & Business Services as soon as possible. (You may submit a Service Request via the University Housing Service Requester: from your MyCalPoly portal page, click the Housing tab then click the Service Requester button). A University Housing Manager will be contacted to conduct an initial assessment. As warranted, a professional pest control company will be contacted to treat your room.

How do I prevent getting bed bugs?

- Do not bring infested items in to your room. Thoroughly inspect any "freebie" or second hand furniture or accessories before you bring them in.
- Check luggage, clothing and bedding after trips; especially after trips abroad.
- Clean up and reduce clutter to eliminate some of their favorite hiding spots.
- Keep rooms clean and tidy. Vacuum crevices and upholstery regularly.
- Vacuum mattresses frequently or permanently encase mattress in a mattress bag.
- Pull bed away from wall or other furniture. Tuck in sheets and blankets to avoid contact with the floor or walls.



If you should have any other questions or concerns, do not hesitate to ask your Resident/Community Advisor, Coordinator of Student Development or Housing & Business Services Offices (resident halls 756-1587, apartments 756-9320).

These facts have been adapted from information provided by the National Pest Management Association, Inc., and we encourage you to further explore this national issue at the following websites:

TAMU, Center for Urban & Structural Entomology
<http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/bedbugs/bedbugs.cfm>

Jeff White, Research Entomologist
<http://www.bedbugcentral.com/>

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