WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mostly at night on the blood of humans and other warm-blooded hosts. Adults are red or brown in color and 6 mm long (1/4 inch) about the size of an apple seed. New born nymphs are translucent and 1 mm long (a little smaller than 1/32 inch). The small size makes the early stages of an infestation hard to detect allowing the bed bugs time to increase in population. This is one of the reasons people report they suddenly had an infestation.

DIFFERENT STAGES OF BED BUGS

It is unlikely for a Bed Bug to come into our homes on a person's body; but they may come in on a person's belongings such as clothes, coat, shoes, suitcases, or backpacks that have been stored in an infested area. It is crucial that you thoroughly inspect any item before bringing it into your home. Second hand furniture, furniture rentals, garage and yard sale items, and items retrieved from the trash should be highly suspect and inspected.
WHAT DO I LOOK FOR?

Bed bugs are small, but they are not so small or so fast that they can’t be seen. If you suspect that you may have bed bugs, investigate around your bed and furniture.

A strip of cellophane or duct tape can be patted around furniture and beds as well as on areas of the skin that you think has something crawling on it.

Look for smears of blood on your sheets and pillowcases; these are caused by crushing engorged bed bugs as you toss and turn in your sleep. Look for groupings of tiny black spots; these are excrement stains. It is very likely that you will also find bed bugs in these areas too.

Bed bugs want to hide in places that are dark, isolated, protected and close to their host. Inspect the folds, tucks and piping of mattresses and box springs. They may congregate anywhere their hosts spend a lot of time: in bed, on the couch or favorite chair. They can also be in lesser numbers in less obvious hiding places such as chest of drawers, picture frames, books, curtains, items stored under the bed, etc. Piles of clothes or coats on or near beds or couches can also easily be infested.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Some people are embarrassed or afraid of the unfounded stigma often associated with a bed bug infestation. Some people are living with bed bugs and don’t know it. These people and their living quarters can be the source for other infestations. Finding infestations is the first step in control.

Detailed vacuuming (using a crevice tool) of baseboards, furniture, and any nook or cranny that you suspect the bugs may be hiding can also help catch and remove problem pests before they can become established. Use a vacuum cleaner that has a fine particle filter or bag, thus eliminating the chance that you will expel nymphs and eggs into the air and spread them into other areas. Dispose of the used vacuum filters or bags into a trash bag and tie it securely before throwing it away in an outside dumpster.

Washing clothes and bed linens in hot water will also kill bed bugs including the hard to kill egg stage. Pillows and stuffed animals can be put in the clothes dryer and treated with high heat for 20 minutes. When traveling or at home do not place any suit cases, travel bags, or back packs near a bed.

Remember that it only takes one fertilized female to start or restart an infestation. Clutter should be minimized as much as possible.

If you decide to throw away an infested item, mark it in a way that others will know that it is infested with bed bugs.

It is also suggested that the item be disabled for further use. Cut or slash the fabric on couches or mattresses so that others will not be tempted to use the item in their home or apartment, causing their areas to become infested. This is common in apartment complexes.