

Huron County Public Health

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BED BUGS

HOW TO DEAL

Bed bugs are small, flat, insects that feed primarily on the blood of people while they sleep. They are reddish-brown, do not have wings, and are visible at all stages. Adult bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed. They can live for several months without a blood meal and while they do not spread disease they can be an inconvenience for anyone whose home becomes infested.



Below is a list of things you can do if you notice bed bugs in your home. The sooner you start to attack the infestation, the easier it will be to get rid of these bugs. Using a professional exterminator is the quickest and most effective way to get rid of bed bugs. If a person tackles the problem on their own, it could take a year or more until the bugs are completely gone. HCPH recommends completing these additional steps even when using an exterminator.

STEPS TO TAKE

BEDROOM

- **Cover the mattress, box spring and pillows with allergy/bed bug protective covers.** These run about \$25-\$65 each, and are less expensive than buying a new mattress. Make sure the package says for **bed bugs**. They can be found in local retail stores as well as online.

Leave these covers on for at least a year. Bed bugs trapped inside cannot get out and will die if left inside for over a year. New bed bugs will not be able to get inside.

Don't forget to cover the box spring as well. Special box spring covers can be found online with protective corners to keep the cover from tearing when rubbed against the frame.

- **Make the bed an island.** Make sure the bed touches nothing else. Pull it away from walls and bedside tables. Even if it is only an inch away it will prevent the bugs from crawling onto the bed.

Mattresses should be on a frame and not left on the floor, where bed bugs can easily climb. Remove dust ruffles and make sure no sheets or blankets touch the floor, wall, or nearby furniture.

- **Buy Climb Up Cups** to put the legs of the bed in. These will trap insects coming and going. The cups are used for monitoring the problem. You will be able to see if they are still on the mattress or frame or if they are coming from somewhere else in the room. Even though the insects will die in the cups, this not a form of extermination. Climb up cups can be found online.
- **Sleep in the room you think the bed bugs are in.** This may go against your instincts, but if you move to another room, like the living room, they may follow you and infest other areas of the house.



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STEPS TO TAKE . . . CONTINUED

GETTING RID OF THE PROBLEM

- **Use Diatomaceous Earth (DE).** If used as directed, DE will dehydrate and kill bed bugs it comes into contact with in 24-48 hours. DE is safe for use around people and pets when used as directed (it is not a chemical, but should NEVER be breathed in). The DE will work as long as it is in place and stays dry. Don't forget to reapply after vacuuming. To apply, lay a very fine dusting of DE in areas where bed bugs might hide. Do not put this powder everywhere in the room or in large piles, as bed bugs will just go around.

DE can be purchased in local retail stores by the bag for around \$10-\$14. If purchased by the bag, you will also want to buy a dispenser. A clear salad dressing bottle can work for this purpose and is inexpensive.

- **Insect Sprays and Bombs vs Professional Exterminators.** Bug bombs might actually make the problem worse by driving bed bugs to hide in the walls.

Insect sprays usually only work if you make direct contact with the bed bugs, so bugs that are hiding or eggs will be missed by the spray.

Professional exterminators can offer a variety of treatments and will have access to the most effective treatments currently available.

CLEAN, CLEAN, CLEAN!

- **De-clutter so that bed bugs have fewer places to hide** and so you can easily check routinely to see if you have them.

- **Vacuum frequently in all areas of the home**, not just high traffic areas. Use the crevice tool to get into all nooks and crannies where bed bugs might hide. Throw away vacuum bags in an outside trash container...NOT inside the house. For bag-less vacuums, empty the canister in an outside trash container.
- **Move furniture and turn items upside down.** This will allow you to look for bed bugs and to clean these areas. Clean curtains, wall hangings, behind picture frames...everything!
- **Once you've cleaned items, place them in plastic bags or plastic bins** to keep them from being re-infested. Continue to do this until everything in the room has been cleaned and your home is free of bugs.

CLOTHING

- **Do laundry on HIGH heat in the washer and HIGH heat for 30 minutes in the dryer.** This can kill bed bugs that may be on clothing. Other items such as shoes, plush toys, purses, book bags, etc. can also be treated in the dryer.

Using a hand-held steam cleaner will kill bed bugs and their eggs, but you have to have direct contact with them for this to work.

Inspect and clean all furniture and clothing, new or used, before bringing it into your home.

It is a good idea to live out of plastic containers until you are sure the bugs are gone. You can also dress out of the dryer to ensure you are not carrying bed bugs on your clothing to other locations or vice versa; into your home.



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