

# Let's Beat the Bug!

## *Bed Bug Basics*

- Bed bugs are small insects, about the size of an apple seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, oval and reddish-brown in color. Juvenile bed bugs can be very small and hard to see.
- Bed bugs feed on human blood and can live for over a year without a meal.
- Bed bugs usually hide during the day near where people rest or sleep and then come out at night to feed. Bed bugs do not live on our bodies.
- Some people do not react when bitten by a bed bug.
- Most bed bugs are found within 8 feet of a person's resting place. As the infestation grows, bed bugs will spread further. You can find bed bugs in any of the following places:
  - In mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and bedding
  - In the cracks and crevices of furniture
  - Behind peeling wall paper
  - Behind pictures and clocks
  - In curtains
  - In cracks in hardwood floors
  - Under carpeting
  - Behind electrical outlets or switch plates

## How Do I Know If A Bed Bug Treatment Has Been Successful?

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One of the questions that we are frequently asked is: "when can I be sure the bed bugs are gone?" The short answer is that if you have had a professional treatment and if it has been three weeks since the end of the treatment with no signs (i.e. bites, live bugs, new fecal matter or casts skins) of continuing infestation, then it is likely that your bed bug infestation has been controlled. The problem is that the real answer can be more complicated than this as there may be a number of complicating factors, including:

- The size of the original infestation
- The type of treatment
- How thorough the treatment was
- The type of home

Let's address each of these issues in turn.

### **The Size of the Original Infestation**

The larger the infestation was allowed to become, the more difficult it will be to treat. As bed bugs increase in number they spread from their original hiding places, increasing the number of locations that have to be treated and making the treatment more complex. Larger infestations may take multiple treatments for complete control.



### **The Type of Treatment**

There are a number of recommended treatments for bed bugs; to understand more about the different types of professional treatment please see the Factsheet Titled: *Understanding Bed Bug Treatments* <http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/understanding-bed-bug-treatments/> If an insecticide treatment was used, it is likely that more than one application of insecticides may be necessary for complete control of a bed bug infestation. If a heat treatment is used to control the infestation it is more likely that

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one treatment will be enough, but re treatment may be necessary if there were some areas that were not treated completely, or if bed bugs were reintroduced.

## The Thoroughness of Treatment



Bed bug infestations are complicated, which can make effective control challenging. If a treatment does not address all of the infested areas, which can spread well beyond the bedroom, then multiple repeat treatments will be necessary to successfully control the infestation. This will increase the amount of time between when the treatment process begins and when your home can be considered bed bug free.

## The Type of Home

Unfortunately living in Multi-Family housing can make us more vulnerable to becoming infested with bed bugs as well as making it more challenging to control a bed bug infestation. If you live in Multi-Family housing it is important to speak with the property owner/manager right away if you suspect a bed bug infestation. During the inspection and treatment process it is important to make sure that adjacent units are inspected for bed bugs as well as common areas (i.e. laundry room, lounges, mail room etc.) as your home may not be the only infested unit in the building.

## Monitoring

As you are trying to assess whether or not the infestation has been controlled it is important to periodically check for bites or live bed bugs. We highly recommend that you install mattress encasements on all the mattress and box springs in your home. Installing encasements will not only protect your furniture from any potential future infestations it will also make it much easier for you to quickly do an inspection of the bed for signs of an infestation. In addition to encasements we recommend installing interceptor traps. These traps are designed to be placed under the legs of beds, chairs and sofas to monitor for bed bug infestations. Pest management professionals may also have other types of traps that you can use. Using these monitoring tools will help you assess if an infestation has been successfully controlled. If you continue to see bed bugs or signs of a bed bug infestation than another inspection and treatment may be necessary.

By Amelia Shindelar and Dr. Stephen Kells, 2014

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In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651/201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529.

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