Division of Housing and Food Service

Bedbug Fact Sheet

What are bedbugs?
Bedbugs are small, brownish, flattened insects that feed solely on the blood of animals. The adult bedbug is a wingless insect that is flattened from top to bottom. Adult bedbugs are about 1/4 to 3/8 inch long and reddish brown, with oval, flattened bodies. They are sometimes mistaken for ticks or cockroaches. The young nymphs resemble the adults, but are smaller and somewhat lighter in color. Bedbugs do not fly, but can move quickly over floors, walls, ceilings and other surfaces.

Why should I be concerned about bedbugs?
Although bedbugs can harbor pathogens in their bodies, transmission to humans is highly unlikely, so they are not considered a serious disease threat. Their medical significance is mainly limited to the itching and inflammation from their bites. Infestations also may cause anxiety, embarrassment, and loss of sleep. Despite the fact that the bedbug can acquire many human disease organisms during feeding, there have been no documented cases of disease transmission as a result of bites. However, their bites can produce irritating, itching, and burning sensations.

How can I get bit by a bedbug?
Bedbugs usually bite people at night while they are sleeping. They feed by piercing the skin with an elongated beak through which they withdraw blood, taking about three to 10 minutes to feed, yet the person seldom knows they are being bitten. Symptoms thereafter vary with the individual.

Something has bitten me. How can I tell whether it is a bedbug bite or not?
Bedbug bites usually cause small welts similar to a mosquito bite and tend to be in rows of three or more bites, causing itching and possibly swelling. The bites tend to be on the face, neck, shoulders, arms or hands. The bites are noticed during the middle of the night or first thing in the morning. Bedbugs will leave tiny dark stains on sheets, pillowcases, or mattresses. If bedbugs are present, you should be able to see them as they are ¼” to 3/8” long, as big as a cockroach or tick. If you get bites on the lower legs or ankles, you may be dealing with flea or chigger bites instead of bedbugs.
Where do bedbugs come from?
Bedbugs are efficient hitchhikers and are usually transported on luggage, clothing, beds, furniture, etc. Outbreaks can often be traced to travel, especially in countries or cities where bedbugs are common. This is a particular problem for hotels, motels, and apartments, where turnover of occupants is constant. Bedbugs are small and agile, escaping detection after crawling into suitcases, boxes, and belongings. The eggs are almost impossible to see when laid on most surfaces. Use of secondhand beds, couches, and furniture is another way that the bugs are transported into previously non-infested dwellings. They often spread room to room throughout a building. Unlike cockroaches that feed on filth, the level of cleanliness has little to do with most bedbug infestations.

Where to bedbugs live and hide?
Bedbugs can live in almost any crevice or protected location. The most common place to find them is the bed. Bedbugs often hide within seams, tufts, and crevices of the mattress box spring, bed frame and headboard. A thorough inspection requires dismantling the bed and standing the components on edge so that upper and lower surfaces can be examined. Things to look for are the bugs themselves, and the light-brown, molted skins of the nymphs. Dark spots of dried bedbug excrement are often present along mattress seams or wherever the bugs have resided. Box springs afford many places for bedbugs to hide, especially underneath where the fabric is stapled to the wooden frame. Bedbugs also hide among items stored under beds. Many areas besides beds, however, can harbor bedbugs. Upholstered chairs and sofas should be checked carefully, including seams, tufts, skirts, and crevices. Sofas can be major bedbug hotspots, especially when used for sleeping. Nightstands and dressers should be emptied and examined inside and out.

How do I prevent getting bedbugs?
- Do not bring infested items into your room or apartment. 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.

What do I do if I find bedbugs?
Report any suspected bedbugs to University staff immediately. University staff will carefully inspect your entire room/apartment to determine whether bedbugs are present and to decide what actions are necessary to eliminate bedbugs in your room or apartment.