

# Let's Beat the Bug!

## Bed Bug Basics

- Bed bugs are a small insect, about the size of an apple seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, oval and reddish-brown in color.
- Bed bugs feed on human blood and can live for up to a year without a meal. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping.
- Some people do not react when bitten by a bed bug. Others who do react have a small bump or a large itchy welt depending on the severity of their reaction. Marks from these bites may appear in hours or days after being bitten. Bites usually occur on skin that is exposed during sleep and sometimes occur in lines on the skin.
- If you think you have bed bugs check for the bugs, blood stains, droppings, eggs and shed skins
  - Where you sit and where you sleep
  - In mattresses, box springs, bed frames and bedding
  - In cracks and crevices in bedroom furniture, floor boards, base boards, windows, door frames and electrical outlets

Remember, bed bugs are very small, flat and fast.

**For more information contact the bed bug hotline at 612-624-2200, 1-855-644-2200 [bedbugs@umn.edu](mailto:bedbugs@umn.edu), or visit [www.bedbugs.umn.edu](http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu)**

## Bed Bug Free Holidays



The holiday season is upon us and amid all the joy and celebrations some people may be dealing with unwanted guests. The thought of bed bugs in your home or carried by visitors can cause unnecessary stress during the holidays. By following a few simple steps you can reduce the risk of encountering bed bugs.

For many of us, the winter holidays are an important time to enjoy time with family and friends. Isolating yourself or others due to issues with bed bugs is unnecessary and not a healthy or practical way to deal with a bed bug situation.

### Prevention Tips for Holiday Parties

If you are having a party and are worried about bed bugs here are some simple steps to take:



- Do not put your guests' coats or bags on your beds. There may be bed bugs on these items and they could move from these items onto your bed.
  - Clean out your front closet and use for guests coats and bags during the party. If you are worried about bed bugs you can vacuum the closet after the party to reduce the risks. If you use a vacuum to capture bed bugs, seal and dispose of the vacuum bag as soon as you are done.
  - If space is limited, place a sheet over the bed before putting any coats on the bed. As soon as possible after guests leave, place the sheet in a dryer on medium-high heat for at least 20 minutes and vacuum the bed. See factsheets on "*Laundering Items to Kill Bed Bugs*" and "*Vacuuming to Capture Bed Bugs*" for more information, available at [www.bedbugs.umn.edu](http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu)
- Place shoes on a plastic mat near the door. This plastic mat can be washed with hot soapy water once guests have left.

### Prevent Bed Bugs from Entering your Home with Overnight Guests

If a visitor is coming to stay and you know they had (or have) bed bugs in their home, there are precautions that you can take. Remember that people do not usually carry bed bugs on their bodies, but bed bugs will

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sometimes hitch a ride on clothes that people are wearing. However, bed bugs are more likely to be on personal belongings, such as bags, purses, luggage, laundry, wheelchairs, and similar.

You can take these precautions to reduce the chance of bed bugs entering your home:

- When overnight guests arrive at your home be prepared to immediately:
  - Ask your visitor to change into clean clothes.
  - Launder all their clothing; see *"Laundering Items to Kill Bed Bugs."*
  - Place suitcase/bags into a plastic box or large plastic bag which can be tied shut.
  - Wipe shoes with a damp cloth and hot water (not hotter than 120 °F), or if possible place in a dryer. Some dryers have shoe racks designed for this purpose.
- Use a mattress encasement on the guest bed(s).
- If your guests will be sleeping on a couch place a sheet over the couch, this sheet can then be laundered and the couch vacuumed thoroughly.
- If your visitor is bringing gifts and you are worried about bed bugs on these gifts, after the gift is opened:
  - Launder any clothing or textiles.
  - Wipe down plastic or wood items with a hot, damp cloth.
  - Immediately throwaway boxes and wrapping in a sealed plastic bag.



## Traveling and Dealing with Bed Bugs

If you are going to stay with friends or family who have been dealing with a bed bug infestation you can reduce the risk of bringing bed bugs home by:

- Putting mattress encasements on the bed you will be using, or ask your host to do so.
- Not putting your suitcase, clothing or other personal items on the bed. If possible keep these items distant from the bed.
  - Bring a couple of large plastic bags and store your suitcases inside the bags.
- After returning home, immediately launder your clothing, or seal in a plastic bag until you are able to do so.

Above all, do not panic! Bed bugs are in society and they usually become a problem when people are not cautious. With a few simple steps, bed bugs are easily preventable and should not become an all-consuming worry as we approach and enjoy the winter holidays.

Please remember to enjoy this special time of year with your family and friends.

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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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