

Courtesy of the University of Minnesota's Department of Entomology

a. Where do bed bugs come from? What is their natural habitat?

The natural habitat of bed bugs is human dwellings. Bed bugs have been a known household pest for over 3,300 years and it is assumed that bed bugs evolved from bat bugs at a time when humans were living in close proximity to bats (i.e. in caves)

b. How do bed bugs get into the house?

Bed bugs are brought into houses on infested items (purses, backpacks, furniture and sometimes clothing) and in the case of multi-family housing they may travel from neighboring units.

c. If being clean doesn't attract bed bugs, why is it that people with messy houses seem to have bed bugs infestations?

People with messy houses have no more bed bug infestations than people with clean houses (this is an urban myth) bed bugs are associated with clutter because a cluttered home makes it less likely that you will notice an early infestation and it makes it more complicated to control the infestation.

d. For people who have bed bugs, does that mean they shouldn't visit friends' houses? And does that mean friends shouldn't visit their houses? What can be done about the social repercussions?

People who have bed bugs should not isolate themselves. See this factsheet for some pertinent information <http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-free-holidays/>, it is aimed at holiday visitors but much of the information will be helpful. It is good to take precautions, like not taking purses and bags into friends' homes and wearing clothing that has been freshly laundered or laundered and stored in plastic bags. This will reduce the chance that bed bugs will be transferred from one home to another, but people with bed bugs should not isolate themselves.

e. The [DIY techniques](#) suggested - even after vacuuming, squashing hundreds of thousands of bed bugs does not sound realistic. Are there other options? Is there any hope aside from moving out of the house?

If vacuuming is done well it should capture most of the bed bugs. You should never move out of your house in the hopes of leaving bed bugs behind, the bed bugs will just come with you. There are lots of things you can do in addition to vacuuming. This task-sheet covers the basics and links to a lot of helpful information, <http://bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/>

Anything that can be put in the dryer should be treated that way. Not just clothing and sheets, but pillows and soft toys, shoes and bags etc. (www.bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/laundrying-bedbug-control/) items that cannot go in the dryer may be

able to be frozen to control bed bugs (www.bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/using-freezing-temperatures-for-bedbug-control/) Steam is also an option, but can be difficult b/c you have to rent a high quality steamer (<http://bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/using-steam-to-control-bed-bugs/>). Encasements for all of the mattresses and box springs are essential, they not only trap the bugs that are already in those areas and keep them from growing the infestation they simplify the environment and make it much easier to clean/vacuum the mattress and box spring. You have to be thorough with everything you do.

f. Has immigration contributed to the increase of bed bug infestations?

No, the increase in bed bug infestations is due to an increased mobility (travel, tourism, business), lack of public knowledge about the pest and changes in the types of insecticides that are available on the market.

g. What “safe” pesticides do you recommend using?

All EPA registered pesticides are safe if used according to the label. If you have specific questions about pesticide safety contact the National Pesticide Information Center [1-800-858-7378](tel:1-800-858-7378) or npic@ace.orst.edu