

Top Ten Bed Bugs Tips

Updated: June 16, 2010

1. **Make sure you really have bed bugs, not fleas or ticks or other insects**

You can verify your insect on our [bed bug web page](#) www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs/index.html#identify or check with your [local extension agent](#).

2. **Don't panic**

Eliminating bed bugs is difficult, but it is not impossible. Don't throw out all of your belongings; most of them can be treated and saved. Throwing out belongings is costly, may spread the infestation, and could be unnecessarily stressful.

3. **Think through your treatment options -- Don't immediately reach for the spray can**

Be comprehensive in your approach. [Integrated pest management](#) EXIT Disclaimer techniques may reduce bed bug populations and limit pesticide exposure to you and your family. If pesticide treatment is needed, it is best to bring in a professional. There is help available to [learn about integrated treatment options](#). (2 pp, 63k, About [PDF](#)) EXIT Disclaimer

4. **Reduce the number of hiding places -- Clean up the clutter**

A cluttered home provides more places for bed bugs to hide and makes locating and treating for them more difficult. If bed bugs are in your mattress, using a mattress/box spring encasements makes it more difficult them to get to you while you sleep. To be effective they must be left in place for a year. Be sure to buy a product that has been tested for bed bugs and is strong enough to last for the full year without tearing.

5. **Frequently wash and heat-dry your bed linens**

Wash bed spreads, and clothing that touches the floor to reduce bed bug populations. Bed bugs and their eggs can hide in laundry containers/hampers so clean them when you do the laundry.

6. **Do-it-yourself freezing is not usually reliable for bed bug control**

While freezing can effectively kill bed bugs, temperatures must remain extremely low for an extended period of time. Home freezers typically are not cold enough to kill bed bugs. Freezing temperatures outside may be used to kill bed bugs, but can take several days (at 0oF) to almost a week (at 20°F).

7. High temperatures can kill bed bugs

Raising the indoor temperature with the thermostat or space heaters won't do the job, though. Space heaters must always be used with care, as they have the potential to cause fires and serious burns. Specialized equipment and very high temperatures are required to successfully heat treat a structure. Black plastic bags in the sun might work to kill bed bugs in luggage or small items, provided the contents become hot enough (approximately 110°F for at least 3 hours).

8. Don't pass your bed bugs on to others

Bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers. If you throw out a piece of furniture that is harboring bed bugs, take steps to destroy the item so that no one else adopts it (along with the bugs!).

9. Reduce populations to reduce bites

Thorough vacuuming reduces populations. Carefully vacuum rugs, floors, under beds, around bed legs, bed frames, and all cracks and crevices around the room. Thoroughly vacuum upholstered furniture. Change the bag after each use so the bed bugs can't escape. Place the used bag in a tightly sealed plastic bag and in an outside garbage bin.

10. Turn to the professionals, if needed

Hiring an experienced, responsible pest control professional can increase the likelihood and the speed of success in eliminating bed bugs from your home. If you hire an expert, ensure it is company with a reputable history and ask them to use an [IPM approach](#). (53 pp, 42mb, About [PDF](#)) Contact your [State pesticide Agency](#) [EXIT Disclaimer](#) for guidance about hiring professional pest control companies.