

Tioga County Health Department

Fact Sheet: Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are unable to transmit disease and are not harmful or hazardous to your health; therefore, are not regulated by the Tioga County Health Department. *Any complaints regarding bed bugs should be directed to your local code enforcement officer.*



- **Bed Bugs: What Are They?**
 - Small insects, about the size of an apple seed, that feed on human blood
 - Adult bed bugs have flat, rusty-red-colored oval bodies
 - Often hide in cracks in furniture, floors, or walls
 - When they feed, their bodies swell and become brighter red
- **Bed Bug Bites: What Do They Feel Like and Look Like?**
 - Most bites are initially painless but later turn into large, itchy skin welts
 - There is no red spot in the center
- **Are Bed Bugs Dangerous?**
 - They are not known to spread disease
- **How Does a Home Become Infested With Bed Bugs?**
 - In most cases, they are carried into their homes unknowingly, in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing
 - They may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in the walls and floors
- **How Do I Know If My Home Is Infested With Bed Bugs**
 - You may notice itchy skin welts
 - You may see the bed bugs, small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings
- **How Do I Get Rid of Bed Bugs?**
 - It is recommended by the Tioga County Health Department to hire pest control professionals licensed by the New York State Department of Environmental

Conservation (DEC) to get rid of bed bugs. (Be sure you hire a licensed exterminator – ask to see a copy of their license or check directly with the DEC by calling 607.753.3095 X232 or

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshm/pesticide/appman.htm>) The pest control company should:

- Inspect your home to confirm the presence of bed bugs
- Find and eliminate their hiding places
- Treat your home with special cleaning and/or pesticides if necessary
- Make return visits to make sure bed bugs are gone
- It is hard to see them because they hide in or near beds, other furniture, and in cracks
 - **1. Find out where bed bugs are hiding in your home**
 - Use a bright flashlight to look for bed bugs or their dark droppings on bedroom furniture
 - Use a hot hair dryer to force them out of hiding spaces and cracks
 - **2. Clean areas where bed bugs are likely to hide**
 - Clean bedding, linens, curtains, carpets, and clothes
 - To kill bed bugs: wash items in hot water and dry them on the highest dryer settings. Soak delicate clothing in warm water with lots of laundry soap for several hours before rinsing
 - Scrub mattress seams with a stiff brush to dislodge bed bugs and their eggs
 - Vacuum mattresses, bed frames, nearby furniture, floors, and carpets. Pay special attention to cracks and open spaces. Immediately after vacuuming, place the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it in an outside container
 - Repair cracks in plaster and loose wallpaper
 - If you find bed bugs on a mattress, cover it with a waterproof, zippered mattress cover labeled “Allergen Rated” or “For Dust Mites.” Keep the cover on for at least one year.
 - If your box spring is infested, seal it inside a vinyl box spring cover for at least one year. If no cover is available, throw the box spring away.
 - Dispose of infested items or clutter that can’t be cleaned. Seal tightly in a plastic garbage bag and discard in an outside container.
 - If you throw infested furniture out, make it undesirable (i.e. cut or rip, make unusable). Place a sign on it that says “infested with bed bugs.”
 - Never resell or donate infested furniture
- **Is It Necessary To Use Pesticides To Get Rid Of Bed Bugs?**
 - The best way to get rid of bed bugs is to clean, disinfect, and eliminate their hiding places. Bed bugs can live for several months without food and water so

pest control professionals may use a pesticide. Talk with the pest controller about safe use of pesticides and make sure they:

- Use the least toxic pesticides possible
- Follow instructions and warnings on product labels
- Advise you about staying out of treated rooms and when it is safe to return
- Treat mattresses and sofa by applying small amounts of pesticides on seams only. Pesticides should Never be sprayed on top of mattresses and sofas

- **How Can I Prevent Bed Bugs?**

- Wash clothing and bedding immediately after returning from a trip
- Inspect used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into your home
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into your home