

## HOME OWNERS AND TRAVELERS

### The bottom line

For most people, bed bugs are more of a nuisance than a medical threat. Humans are generally responsible for introducing bed bugs into new areas; they have a limited home range, and spread slowly by themselves. So with some diligence, you should be able to eliminate the infestation using an IPM approach.

- First, **identify** the insect.
- **Inspect** the rooms thoroughly, focusing on the bedroom. Look for signs of bed bugs, for possible hiding places and for openings that would allow them to enter your home.
- **Clean** and **get rid of clutter** to eliminate their shelter.
- Choose the **removal** methods that best fit your situation; if that includes a pesticide; opt for a less toxic one.
- Make any **repairs** needed to prevent future invasions.

### TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

Bed bugs are often found in places that experience a high volume of overnight guests, such as hotels and motels, hostels, and dormitories. Remember, they feed at night while you're sleeping, then retreat to a sheltered crevice by morning. That shelter might be within your luggage or souvenirs.

When visiting a hotel, check the room quickly for signs of bed bugs, such as blood stains on the pillows or linens. Inspect the seams of the mattress carefully. Peek behind the headboard and wall decor. Bed bugs will hide in these places; if you don't see them or their signs, there should be no problem.

If it's possible, move the bed away from the wall. Tuck in the linens and keep the blanket from touching the floor. Unfortunately, leaving the lights on will not unduly stress bed bugs. (Some sources claim that medieval travelers placed a pig in their beds to sate the bed bugs.

### WHAT ABOUT PESTICIDES?

Pesticides are another option for killing bed bugs, but as early as 1948 there were reports of bed bugs that were resistant to such insecticides as DDT; such resistance complicates efforts to manage populations using pesticides. Luckily, several types of less toxic products for killing bed bugs are now available, and because some of these products work in different ways, bed bugs also won't be able to develop resistance to them as easily. For example, silica gel dusts work by chafing the outer waxy cuticle of an insect, causing it to rapidly lose water and die. Silica gel is sometimes combined with pyrethrins, which are toxic to insects. They're often used in wall voids and inaccessible places around the home.

Other insecticides include botanical oil products that repel and kill insects; even some cleaning products are labeled for use against bed bugs. To learn about insecticides that are registered for use against bed bugs in Maine Contact: [Cooperative Extension | University of Maine](#) [www.extension.umaine.edu](http://www.extension.umaine.edu)  
**Cooperative Extension** Phone: 207.581.3188 or 800.287.0274 (in **Maine**) E-mail: [extension@maine.edu](mailto:extension@maine.edu).

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