

Don't let the

BED BUGS BITE:

AVOIDING BED BUGS IN YOUR HOME



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BED BUGS have been bothersome to humans for centuries, but in recent years, bed bug populations have increased dramatically in the United States. You may have heard about bed bug infestations in hotels, or perhaps you have a bed bug issue in your own home. Bed bugs don't discriminate. Everyone needs to know basic information about bed bugs. The following will provide you with answers to common bed bug questions and help you avoid bringing them home, especially when shopping for secondhand items such as clothing and furniture.



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EXTENSION

What do bed bugs look like?

It can be hard to distinguish bed bugs from other bugs, such as immature cockroaches and carpet beetles.

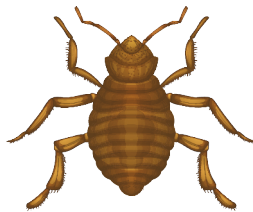
Bed bugs go through three different life-cycle stages.

When trying to identify a bed bug, **look for the following:**



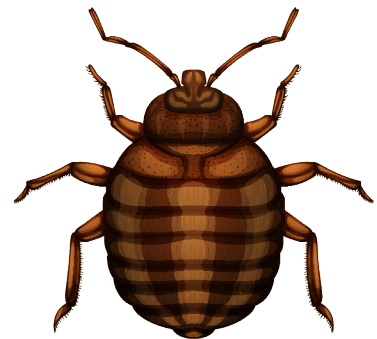
EGG:

- Size of a pinhead
- White in color



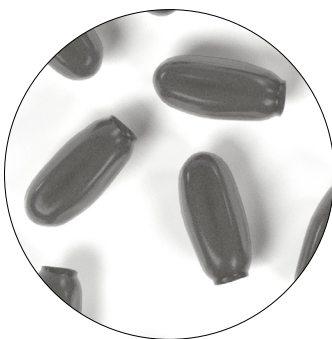
IMMATURE (NYMPH):

- Size of a poppy seed
- Transparent or yellowish in color
- Becomes increasingly darker with each of five molts



ADULT:

- Size of an apple seed
- Flat, oval-shaped body, brown in color
- After feeding: reddish/brown in color, elongated and balloon-shaped body



Bed bug eggs viewed under a microscope and dyed for visibility.



Immature bed bug, engorged with blood.



Fully mature bed bug.

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S BED BUGS?

It is very important to have what you believe to be a bed bug identified by a person competent to make that identification. If you suspect that you have bed bugs, send a bug (or bugs) to your county Extension agent. If you live in Georgia, call **1-800-ASK-UGA1** to locate the Extension agent where you live.

What are some signs that bed bugs are in my home?

- Seeing and identifying live bed bugs. An accurate identification should be left to the county Extension office or a professional pest management company.
- Observing dark spots (bed bug excrement) on your fabric or sheets.
- Finding the shed skins of immature bed bugs or bed bug eggs.

Can bed bugs be harmful to my health?

Bed bugs feed on the blood of humans and other mammals (such as dogs and cats) but do not transmit disease like other biting insects, such as mosquitoes. Bed bug bites can be more of a nuisance than anything, sometimes leaving those who have been bitten with itchy, red welts. Bites are not a great way to determine whether you have a bed bug problem, as a vast majority of people have no reaction to the bites. For many people the bites are itchy, and scratching can lead to a secondary skin infection. Additionally, those who have or think they may have bed bugs may experience anxiety or lack of sleep as a result.



How do bed bugs enter my home?

Bed bugs are expert hitchhikers and there are many ways they can get into your home. Some of those ways include:

- **Luggage.** When traveling, bed bugs may hide in your luggage and travel with you back home. Avoid putting your luggage on hotel beds or on the floor. Instead, place your luggage on a luggage rack away from the wall.
- **Guests.** Visitors who have been traveling may bring bed bugs into your home unknowingly, as bed bugs may be hiding in their personal belongings. When your guests leave, inspect the room where they stayed.
- **Movie theaters.** Cinemas or other places where people sit for extended periods are prone to bed bugs.

- **Secondhand items, including clothing and furniture.** Shopping at a thrift store or consignment store for furniture can be fun and is a great way to save money and find unique items, however, the items you buy may be home to bed bugs. Bed bugs can go for long periods without a blood meal. Furniture that is out by the road may look fine but could be infested with bed bugs. Be sure to check used items for bed bugs, and clean them thoroughly before bringing them into your home. Bed bugs hide in tiny holes, cracks, or along seams.

Shopping Secondhand & **BED BUG FREE**

Secondhand Item	Before Purchasing	After Purchase
Household textiles and clothing	Look along the seams and in the pockets. Turn the item inside out, if possible, and shake it.	Immediately wash the item(s) using normal settings and detergent and dry on a normal setting. Dispose of the bag used for the item. Place it in an outdoor trash bin. Heat kills bed bugs and the eggs, so if an item cannot be washed, it can be placed in the dryer for one cycle. You can also place items in a hot car.
Delicate or dry-clean only garments	Inspect the garment in the manner described above.	Dry clean or follow the washing guidelines above.
Upholstered furniture	Remove cushions and inspect along the edges and seams. Carefully inspect the frame and the underside for signs of bed bugs.	Before bringing the item inside, vacuum thoroughly. Empty the vacuum cleaner into the outside trash. You can steam fabric items, like sofas and chairs, then leave them in an open area for a few days. Recheck for signs of bed bugs and treat if necessary. You can place items in a small, sealed room and heat it to 120 degrees Fahrenheit for several hours.
Furniture, including bed headboards and frames	Remove and thoroughly inspect all removable parts—like drawers—paying attention to cracks, edges, joints, and screw holes. Use a flashlight to inspect for signs of bed bugs. Wiping surfaces with a light colored rag may show signs of previous activity.	Vacuum before bringing indoors. When vacuuming is complete, empty the bag into an outdoor trash bin. If possible, wash hard surfaces with soapy water and a scrub brush. Let them dry completely to avoid mold problems. You can place items in a small, sealed room and heat it to 120 degrees Fahrenheit for several hours.

Adapted from Peek & Lee, 2015.

Where do bed bugs hide in my home?

During the day, bed bugs usually crowd together and hide in small spaces. Some common hiding places include:

- Behind headboards
- Box springs
- Seams of mattresses
- Along the baseboard and corners of a room
- Inside or behind furniture, like couches, chairs, nightstands
- In screw holes, in electrical sockets, or behind switch covers

What can I do to prevent bed bugs from infesting my home?

- Decrease the amount of clutter in your home. This reduces the number of hiding places for bed bugs.
- Vacuum frequently.
- Use protective covers on your bed frame and mattress, reducing the number of potential hiding places for bed bugs.
- Check and clean secondhand items thoroughly before bringing them into your home.
- Wash clothes immediately after traveling.
- During warm weather, place suspected items in a car parked in the sunshine with the windows rolled up.

I found bed bugs in my home, what can I do to get rid of them?

- Consult a pest management professional. Controlling bed bugs is difficult. Over-the-counter pesticide products are generally ineffective at controlling bed bugs. Nearly everyone will need professional help. Bed bugs are able to hide well and reproduce often, so they can spread quickly if proper control methods are not used. When hiring a professional, make sure that they use integrated pest management methods and that they have prior experience with bed-bug control.
- Prepare your home for treatment: Reduce clutter, clean all items within the infested area, launder items that can be laundered, dry laundry on the highest setting to kill bedbugs, then store laundry in sealed plastic bags.
- Encase your mattress and box spring in a cover made to keep bedbugs inside. Never treat your bedding with insecticide.
- Wash all pet bedding.

How do I dispose of infested items?

In most cases, it is not necessary to dispose of items that have been infested with bed bugs. In fact, moving infested objects throughout your home may do more harm than good, as bed bugs may fall off and cause the infestation to spread. That being said, there are circumstances that may warrant disposing of a bed-bug-infested item. When disposing of the item, seal or wrap it in plastic when moving it throughout the home. When putting items at the curb, write on the item that it is infested with bed bugs, or make the item unusable so that no one will pick the item up to use in their own home.

What is integrated pest management (IPM)?

IPM is a combination of chemical and non-chemical methods, such as heat, steam, approved pesticide use, and HEPA-filter vacuuming.

For more information about do-it-yourself bed bug control visit:

www.epa.gov/bedbugs/do-it-yourself-bed-bug-control

Eight Ways to Make Your Home Healthier

- Keep your home pest-free.
- Keep your home dry.
- Keep your home clean.
- Keep your home contaminant-free.
- Keep your home safe.
- Keep your home ventilated.
- Keep your home maintained.
- Keep your home green and energy efficient.



Georgia Healthy Housing

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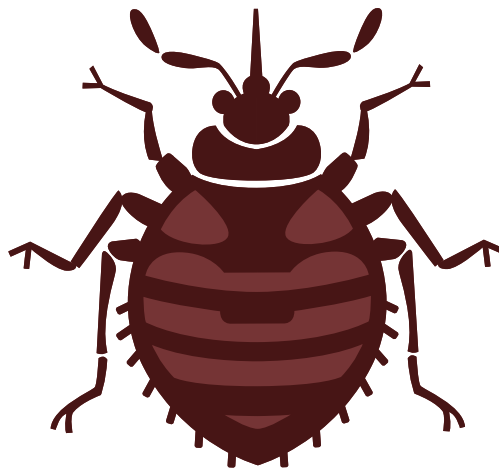
For more information on how to make your home healthier, visit healthyhomes.uga.edu

Everyone deserves a safe and healthy home.

Questions? Contact **Pamela R. Turner**, prturner@uga.edu

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