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# BED BUGS BITE:

AVOIDING BED BUGS IN YOUR HOME

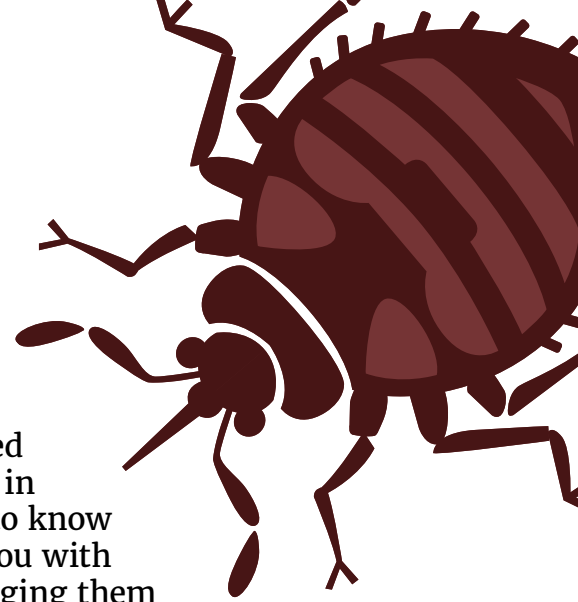
**BED BUGS** have been bothersome to humans for centuries, but in recent years, bed bug populations have increased dramatically in the United States. You may have heard about bed bug infestations in hotels, or perhaps you have a bed bug issue in your own home. Bed bugs don't discriminate. Everyone needs 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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## HOW DO BED BUGS ENTER MY HOME?

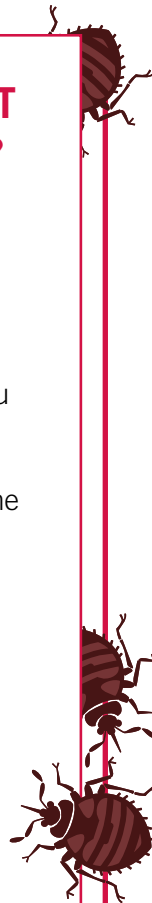
**Bed bugs are expert hitchhikers** and there are many ways they can get into your home. Some of those ways include:

- 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.

## WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS THAT BED BUGS ARE IN MY HOME?

It is very important to have what you believe to be a bed bug identified by a person competent to make that identification, such as someone with Extension or a professional pest management company. If you suspect you have bed bugs, bring a bug (or bugs) to your county Extension agent. If you live in Georgia, call **1-800-ASK-UGA1** to locate the nearest Extension office.

- Seeing and identifying live bed bugs. An accurate identification should be left professionals.
- Observing dark spots (bed bug excrement) on your fabric or sheets.
- Finding the shed skins of immature bed bugs or bed bug eggs.



# 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.

## 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.



**Georgia Healthy Housing**  
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For more information on how to make your home healthier, visit [healthyhomes.uga.edu](https://healthyhomes.uga.edu)

For references and the full circular, see [extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C1108](https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C1108)



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