

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF BED BUGS IN DONATED ITEMS

Charities, second-hand stores and other organizations distribute millions of donated items every year. While the chance of finding bed bugs in used goods is low, infestations are increasingly common in homes and businesses in New York City and across the country. No one wants bed bugs! Here are some simple ways to prevent the spread of bed bugs when you donate, receive or purchase used items.

### DONATING GOODS

- Donate only clean items in good condition that are free of bed bugs, other pests and contaminants.
- Wash or dry-clean clothing, and sort and bag it appropriately. Properly dispose of infested items that cannot be easily treated. Never donate or sell infested items!
- Ask the organization to which you are giving how they want to receive your donation. For example, some ask that you make a list of the items you're donating, or pack them a certain way.
- The Health Department recommends that organizations and stores ask their donors about bed bugs. Please answer truthfully – no need to be embarrassed. Bed bugs can happen to anyone!
- Protect the charities you support. Remember that an infested or damaged item can cost an organization more to clean, fix or discard than it is worth. Even one infested item can spread bed bugs throughout a facility.

### RECEIVING GOODS

- Always ask an organization how it handles incoming merchandise before you buy or receive used goods. Some charities and second-hand stores routinely inspect donations for bed bugs and other pests, and clean and treat items before they sell or give them away. But many others do not.
- Learn how to recognize bed bugs and their markings (blood stains, shed skins and droppings).
- Thoroughly inspect every item you receive before mixing it with your other belongings, using the tips that follow.

### MATTRESSES, BOX SPRINGS AND BED FRAMES

- Most bed bugs in infested homes are found in mattresses and box springs. Don't accept or buy used mattresses or box springs unless you are sure they have been reconditioned and sanitized.
- Thoroughly check bed frames and head boards. Wood beds (especially captain's beds) and head boards (especially wicker) may harbor more bed bugs than those made of metal. Bed bugs can also hide in metal and plastic crevices and in places where a mattress touches a metal frame.
- Inspect all seams. Look inside folds and under buttons, furniture staples and tacks. If the mattress or box spring is covered in vinyl plastic, look inside seams and rips.
- If you accept or purchase a second-hand bed, inspect it thoroughly as described above and cover the mattress and box spring with a zippered encasement. Leave the cover on for at least a year. Inspect the cover regularly, and repair rips or tears immediately.

### CLOTHING

- Look for bed bugs in clothing and other fabrics, such as coats, linens, blankets and soft toys. Inspect all pockets, cuffs, linings, seams, tufts and folds.
- Place newly received items in a sealed plastic bag. Launder washable items as soon as possible, before mixing them with other clothing. To destroy both bed bugs and their eggs, use hot water (above 140 degrees) and dry on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes.
- Dry cleaning and steam cleaning will get rid of bed bugs in fabrics that can't be washed and dried at high settings.

## **FURNITURE**

- Avoid damaged furniture. Holes and cracks give bed bugs a place to enter and hide.
- Inspect furniture thoroughly before you bring it into your home. A flashlight and a magnifying glass will help.
- Check upholstered furniture for rips and tears where bed bugs could enter. Examine seams and linings carefully. Remove cushions and check the underside and back.
- Check all surfaces, including screw and nail holes. Remove drawers and check all corners, cracks, crevices, seams and joints as well as the back and underside.
- Check for bed bugs in cracks and crevices with a putty knife or an old card.

## **LUGGAGE**

- Bed bugs can hitch a ride on luggage, especially soft-fabric bags.
- Check all linings, folds and seams. Look under straps and along the edge of zippers. If possible (depending on the material) run soft luggage through a hot dryer to kill bed bugs. Or use a hand-held blow dryer to heat the seams

## **PAINTINGS AND PICTURE FRAMES**

- Examine the backs of paintings and picture frames for black or brown spots that could be signs of bed bugs.
- Avoid porous and ornate frames. Choose solid wood and mark-free frames instead.

## **HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES AND ELECTRONICS**

- Kitchen appliances, sporting goods, electronics and other household items are not prime locations for bed bugs, but you should still examine them.
- Pay special attention to items that have been kept in bedrooms.