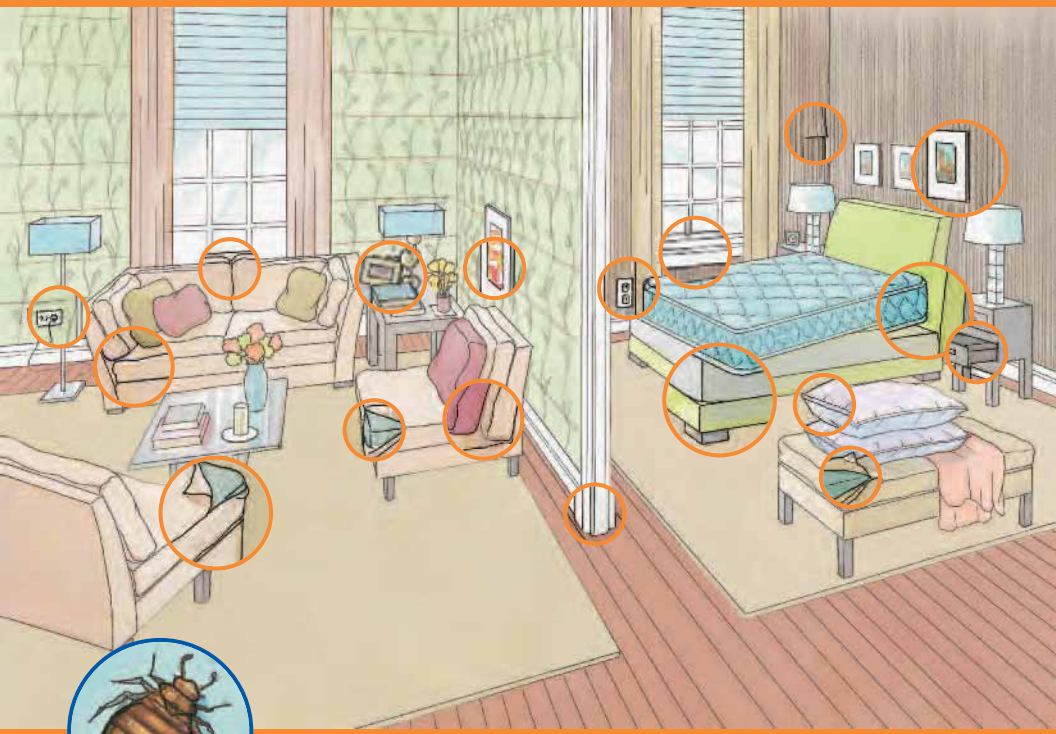
Preventing and Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely



A Guide for Residents

A Healthy Homes Guide

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NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Contents

Using This Guide 1

Recognizing a Bed Bug 1

How Bed Bugs Grow and Reproduce 2

The Health Effects of Bed Bugs 3

Preventing Bed Bugs from Infesting Your Home 3

Inspecting for Bed Bugs 4

Prepare Your Apartment for Treatment 5

More Information Back Cover

Using This Guide

Bed bug infestations are increasingly common in New York City. There are steps that can be taken to prevent bed bugs from infesting your home. When bed bugs are present, they can be safely controlled.

This guide will help you:

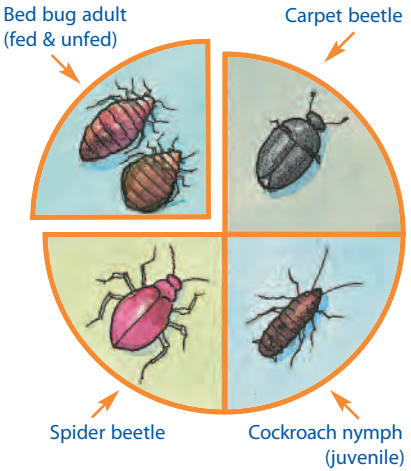
1. Learn more about bed bugs and how they thrive.
2. Prevent bed bugs from infesting your home.
3. Safely rid your home of bed bugs if they do occur.
4. Prepare your apartment for treatment.

Recognizing a Bed Bug

From its appearance

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mainly on human blood. A newly hatched bed bug is semi-transparent, light tan in color, and the size of a poppy seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, have rusty-red-colored oval bodies, and are about the size of an apple seed.

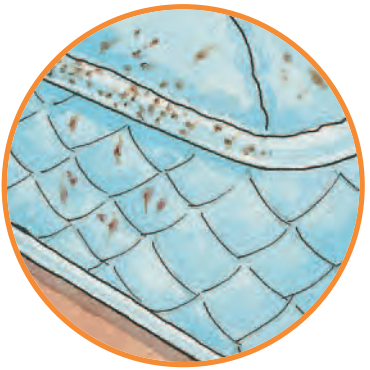
Bed bugs can be easily confused with other small household insects, including carpet beetles, spider beetles and newly hatched cockroaches (nymphs).



From its markings, droppings and eggs

Blood stains, droppings and eggs can be found in several locations including:

- Mattress seams and tufts, sheets, pillow cases and upholstered furniture.
- Crevices and cracks in furniture.
- Baseboards of walls.



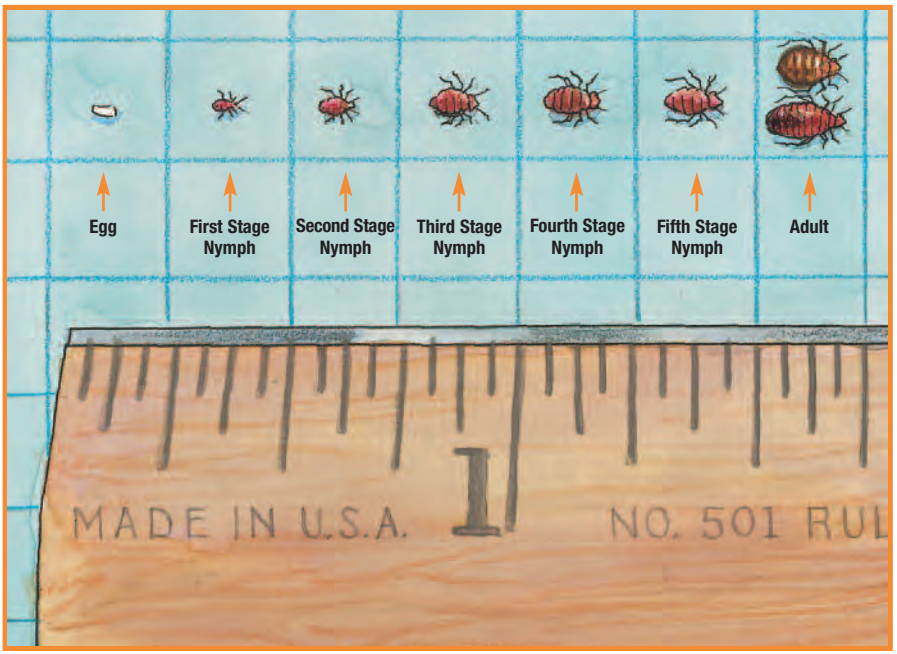
From its bite

Some people do not react to bed bug bites. But for those who do, bite marks may appear within minutes or days, usually where skin is exposed during sleep. They can be small bumps or large itchy welts. The welts usually go away after a few days. Because the bites may resemble mosquito and other insect bites, a bump or welt alone does not mean there are bed bugs.

How Bed Bugs Grow and Reproduce

Bed bugs are most active when we sleep. They crawl onto exposed skin, inject a mild anesthetic and suck up a small amount of blood. Most people never feel the actual bite.

Bed bugs need a blood meal to grow and lay eggs. A female lays 5-7 eggs per week and if fed, will lay 200-500 eggs in her life. Eggs take about 10 days to hatch. Bed bugs are fully grown in 2 to 4 months and can live as long as a year.



The Health Effects of Bed Bugs

Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

- Bed bug bites can be very itchy and irritating. Most welts heal in a few days but in unusual cases, the welt may persist for several weeks. Usually an anti-itching ointment will help, but if bites become infected, people should see their doctor.
- The anxiety about being bitten can lead to sleeplessness, which can affect one's wellbeing. Properly and effectively responding to bed bugs helps to keep anxiety in check.

Some people become so desperate that that they use illegal or excessive amounts of pesticides that can lead to poisonings. This guide provides advice on how to get rid of bed bugs safely.

Preventing Bed Bugs from Infesting Your Home

Bed bugs can enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage and clothing, and by traveling along connecting pipes and wiring.

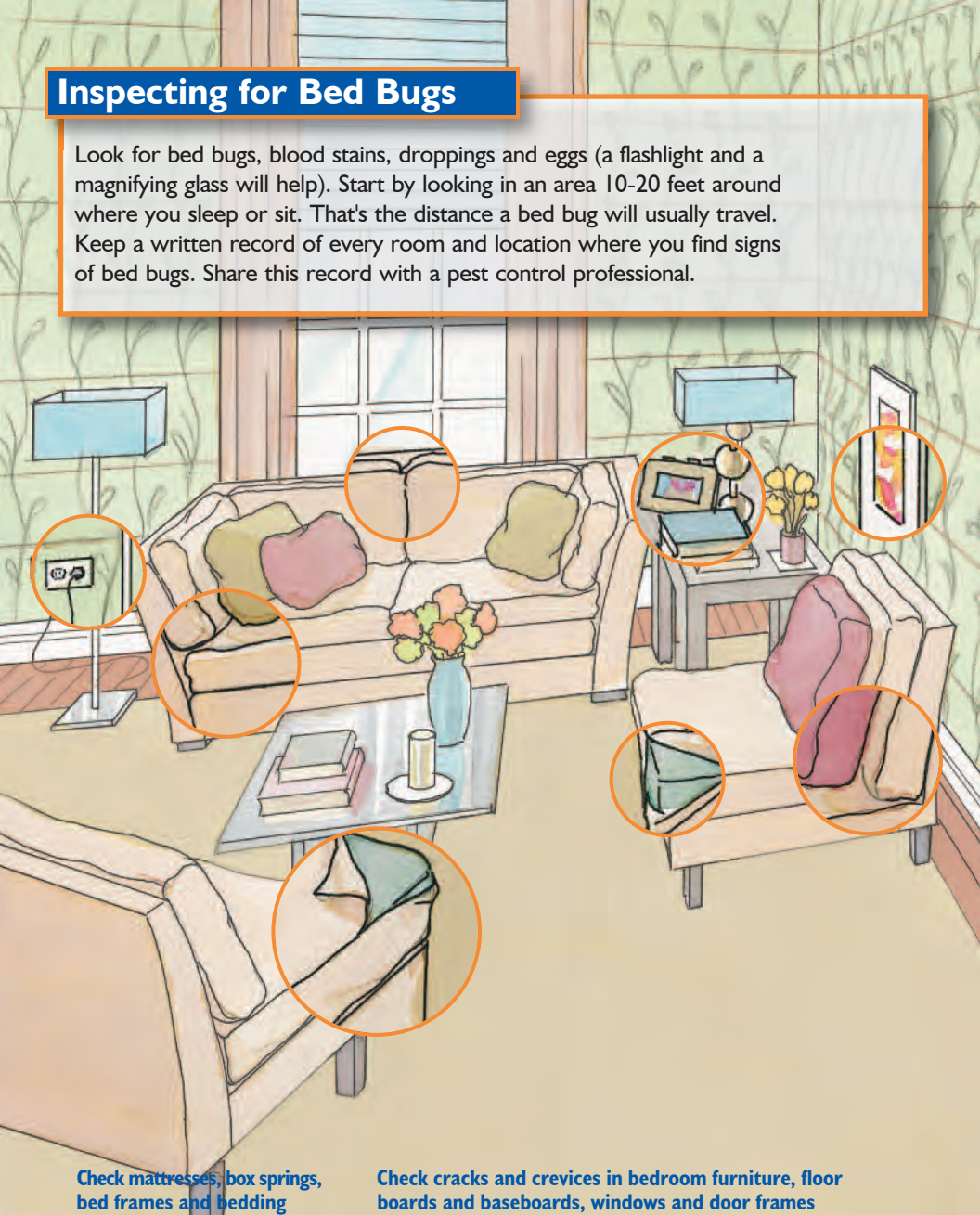
- Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home.

- Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs.
- When traveling, inspect the bed and furniture. Keep suitcases off the floor and bed, and inspect them before you leave.
- If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can.

- Seal cracks and crevices with caulk, even if you don't have bed bugs. This will help prevent bed bugs and other pests from coming in.

Inspecting for Bed Bugs

Look for bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs (a flashlight and a magnifying glass will help). Start by looking in an area 10-20 feet around where you sleep or sit. That's the distance a bed bug will usually travel. Keep a written record of every room and location where you find signs of bed bugs. Share this record with a pest control professional.



Check mattresses, box springs, bed frames and bedding

- Check the top and bottom seams, tufts and any rips in the covers of mattresses and box springs.
- Look underneath the bed and along the bed frame and headboards.

Check cracks and crevices in bedroom furniture, floor boards and baseboards, windows and door frames

- Use a flash light to inspect cracks and crevices of furniture, windows and door frames.
- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and even screw holes.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR BED BUG TREATMENT

Please take the following steps to prepare for treatment:

- Remove all bedding from affected beds and sofa beds and place in plastic bags to be washed.
- Remove curtains from windows in affected rooms and place in plastic bags to be washed.
- Place worn night clothes in plastic bags to be washed.
- Remove any clothes and other items from the floor.
- Items in closets and drawers are only removed if bed bugs are sighted there or if night clothes are placed there after sleeping.
- Vacuum carpets in affected areas and throw away debris in taped bags.
- Wash items after the apartment is treated and throw away the plastic bags.

Do not attempt to treat bed bugs yourself. Contact the NYCHA Customer Contact Center at 718-707-7771 for an appointment with an exterminator.

Key Messages about Bed Bugs

- Learn to identify the signs of bed bugs.
- Dirty living conditions do not cause bed bugs but cleaning and removing clutter will help in controlling them.
- Anyone can get bed bugs. Seek help immediately if you find them.
- Sealing cracks and small holes will help to reduce hiding places and prevent bed bugs from crawling between apartments.
- Cooperate with your neighbors.
  Getting rid of bed bugs needs to involve everyone.
- Do not use pesticide bombs or foggers to control pests.
  They can make conditions worse.
- It is hard, but not impossible to get rid of bed bugs.
  The advice in this guide will help.

Please call the NYCHA Customer Contact Center at 718-707-7771 for assistance. For information about the New York City Housing Authority please visit our website at: www.nyc.gov/nycha

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