

Bed Bugs: First Bite to Peaceful Sleep

When we tuck in for the night, the last thing we expect is to have a stranger in the bed. The truth is, strangers can indeed lurk in the bedding, causing the unknowing victim to wake up itchy and irritable.

Bed bugs are an unpleasant fact of life. These insects can be found virtually the world over; in cities and rural areas, from inner-city neighbourhoods to ivory towers.

The bed bug is known in scientific circles as *Cimex lectularius*. They are one small branch in that immense family tree known as Insecta. If ever a time came when all of the creatures of the Earth were eliminated, the insects would be last standing. With their resilience and flexibility, insects would be left to occupy the planet long after the humans and mammals had become extinct. This is why many insects, including bed bugs, can be so hard to exterminate.

How to Spot a Bed Bug

They are so tiny that it can be hard to spot them. A magnifying glass or lens is required to take a good look. When viewed from the top (the best way to view them if you absolutely must take a closer look), bed bugs appear to be quite flat. In North America, bed bugs are typically deep brown in color. In Europe and other parts of the world, however, these insects can range from white to a creamy white color.

The most unpleasant fact about bed bugs is that they feed on human blood. Soon after feeding the insects will have black or deep red masses in their stomach areas, and will appear to be bloated.

How Bed Bugs Feed

Like their distant cousins the Mosquitoes, bed bugs have tiny beaks. They use these beaks to pierce through the host's skin. Once through the skin, bed bugs will sip and suck the blood. The good news is that because of their extremely diminutive size, bed bugs will barely take a fourth of a milliliter of blood from you. The bites will leave small red marks that may swell within a few hours. The affected area can also cause itching and discomfort to the victim.

Extermination

It's not easy to get rid of bed bugs. They are too tiny to swat, and an infestation can bring a large number of these parasites to your boudoir. While it would be possible to watch and catch and squish them one by one, that would be a tedious and time-consuming affair. There are easier ways.

It is possible to annihilate bed bugs with an application of pesticides or insecticides, but this chemical application will surely pose a threat to yourself, your family and any pets in your home. While human extermination due to pesticide use is unlikely, the chemicals can cause adverse reactions. Hire a credible and professional pest control company, just to be on the safe side. They will understand the bugs and can provide your best course of defense.

Prevention

It's been said that an ounce of prevention worth more than a pound of cure. In other words, it's a lot easier to prevent bed bugs from arriving than it is to persuade them to leave. Hygiene can play an important role in preventing an infestation. Wash bedclothes and pillows regularly and dry them in a hot dryer. Vacuuming the mattress can also help.

When you travel, use common sense and realize that bed bugs are certainly a threat. If you do encounter them along your journey, you need to know that they may hitch a ride along with you. While bed bugs do not choose humans as their primary means of transport, they are known to travel among clothing or even baggage. If you think that your belongings may have become infested, find a laundry service or coin laundry and clean everything before moving on. You may also wish to have your luggage cleaned before packing it away at home. This may seem extreme, but it's much better than experiencing a home invasion.

There's nothing worse than an unwanted bed guest, particularly the six-legged variety. Keep this information in mind when you turn out the lights, and you can wake up clean, refreshed and at peace.