

Pest Management

Bed Bugs

Housekeeping Procedures for Bed Bugs

Thorough cleaning, in the form of vacuuming and washing floors and furniture, is an essential step in bed bug and cockroach control. Cleaning, alone will not eliminate bed bugs but is necessary to crash high populations. Cleaning removes debris that may contribute to allergies and asthma, and removing bugs, droppings, and cast skins allows the inspector to spot new activity.

Vacuuming does not easily remove eggs and bugs hiding in cracks but can pick up bugs and cast skins in easily accessible areas. In places, such as dorms, cleaning teams or the facility management may be responsible for the majority of housekeeping duties. Cleaning for bed bugs should focus on sleeping and lounging areas, (whereas cockroach control depends on sanitation in cooking and eating areas). However for cleaning to have any impact, the resident must cooperate by reducing clutter, organizing, and bagging their belongings. There may be a need to store their belongings temporarily. Be certain every item is bagged until it can be cleaned of bed bugs. Units should always be cleaned before new tenants move in.

A cleaning procedure for bed bugs begins with vacuuming, using a HEPA-equipped vacuum that is dedicated only to pest control. Although a regular vacuum is acceptable, a HEPA equipped vacuum will reduce the spread of allergens. A crevice tool will be needed to focus suction in small spaces, cracks and crevices. Use the crevice tool with a scraping motion to dislodge bugs and eggs, because bed bugs cling to wood and fabric and the eggs are cemented to the surface where they are laid. A brush attachment can also be used but must be cleaned carefully to prevent the spread of bugs. See below for proper handling of the vacuum cleaner and vacuum bags.

CLEANING AND ORGANIZING A ROOM OR RESIDENCE

Cleaning and organizing a room or home for bed bug management can be as burdensome as changing residences, it is, however, an extremely important first step to control bed bugs, because bed bugs will thrive in a cluttered living area. Vacuuming and cleaning should be done before a pesticide application or treatment. Cleaning should be carried out in a systematic way, beginning with removing items from the infested room or residence. Soap or detergent will aid in the cleanup of bed bug debris and allergens, making the environment healthier and more tolerable for those living there. Essential oil soaps (pine, orange or lemon), enzyme soaps, and sudsy detergents are good choices. Bleach and ammonia do not kill bed bugs and should not be used to combat them. Their vapors can also be harmful.

STEPS TO FOLLOW INCLUDE:

- Scan the room for items on the floor. Make a plan for each item, and how it will be quarantined (closed into a plastic bag, for example), inspected, sanitized of bed bugs, and stored until further notice.

- Place clothes, shoes, plush toys, pillows, and bedding into large clear plastic bags and seal them tightly to be laundered. Place the bags away from the infestation site.
- Alternatively, plastic tote bins that have an airtight seal can be used for items that cannot be laundered, such as hard toys, electronics, books, breakable items, etc. Be prepared to store these items for a period of time until they can be thoroughly inspected or enough time has passed that bed bugs are dead – at least a year.

VACUUMING:

- Once the room has been “stripped” of all personal belongings, begin vacuuming the bed, paying special attention to the mattress seams.
- Use a crevice tool and a scraping motion.
- Remove the mattress and box spring from the bed frame and inspect and vacuum all surfaces, removing all loose debris and visible bed bugs.
- Flip the bed frame over and vacuum and crevices where bed bugs may hide. This is especially important for wooden bed frames and captain’s beds.
- Vacuum inside and under drawers of night stands, dressers, and other furniture in the room.
- Turn over each piece of furniture and vacuum the under sides of each.
- Pay attention to screw and nail holes, using a credit card crevice tool.
- Vacuum along the bottoms of all walls and the moldings. If molding or wallpaper is loose lift or remove and vacuum beneath.
- Make sure to vacuum around heating units.
- Vacuum along carpet edges.
- Vacuum plush furniture with a carpet beater attachment or by patting the furniture while vacuuming to flush out bed bugs.
- If a vacuum brush attachment is used it is possible some live bugs or eggs could be caught in the brush bristles. Wash the vacuum brush with hot water and detergent if this is a concern.

WASHING SURFACES AND FURNITURE:

- Wash all furniture (non-plush) and hard surfaces in the room using an orange, lemon, or pine based soap or detergent cleanser. Pay attention to crevices and spaces in the frame.
- After removing the mattress and box spring from the bed frame, wash the bed frame liberally with soap and water.
- Wash cribs and children’s bed frames rather than using pesticides.
- Wash the floors, moldings, window sills, and walls generously.
- Steam or hot water heating units can be washed as well. Do not wash electrical heating units.

RUGS AND CARPETING



Bed bug eggs and fecal stains along the edge of the carpet.

Photo by R. Cooper

- Many small rugs can be placed into the dryer on a hot setting for 30 minutes.
- If the room has a large area rug, the rug can be steam cleaned within the same time frame that other bed bug control measures are taking place, although steaming should be done before pesticide applications are made.
- Rugs can be sent out for professional cleaning, as well. Wrap in plastic for transport and warn the cleaning company.
- Wall to wall carpeting can harbor bed bugs and should be removed, especially in a heavy infestation, or steam cleaned, paying very close attention to the edges.
- Previous inspection will help determine where to concentrate steaming efforts.
- The carpet tack strip left behind after wall-to-wall carpet is removed should also be removed for safety purposes, as well as bed bug management.