

Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite

As children most of us have heard the old bedtime saying, "Sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite," but we didn't really give it a second thought. Now more and more people throughout the United States, and specifically in Ohio, have witnessed the harsh reality that bedbugs do exist and are a costly insect to eradicate within your home or business.

Complaints of bedbug invasions have overwhelmed major cities in Ohio, especially in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus. The problem appears to be concentrated in apartment complexes, dormitories and hotels, but many home owners and businesses have also become victims of bed bug infestations. According to reports on Orkin®, Ohio is one of the leading states of bed bug infestations.

Due to the unique life cycle and small size of bed bugs, *Cimex lectularis*, they are very resilient and difficult to eradicate once they have become established within an area. Bed bugs grow from the egg phase to adult size within 37 days, and have a typical lifespan of about four to six months if they are given the optimal environment and resources. However, some bed bugs are known to live up to a year when kept in a cool environment without access to feed. A single female can lay 1 to 5 eggs in a day, and up to 100 to 500 eggs in their lifetime. At the adult phase, they are flat, brownish-red in color, and are about the size of an apple seed. They feed on the blood, primarily from humans. Due to their size, fast growth, and even quicker proliferation, your living space can become infested before you may realize what has happened.

Bed bugs will hide in any crack or crevice like those in mattresses and box springs, bed frames, dressers, upholstered furniture, electrical outlets, wall hangings, ceiling molding and baseboards. The most obvious signs of a bed bug problem are small black spots (feces) deposited in and near these hiding spaces. One of the main locations you may see this is along the seams of your mattress or along the seams of furniture. You may also find shed bed bug skins, egg shells or live bugs. On the surface of the mattress or the furniture you may find small blood stains, which typically occur when a bed bug is squashed.

Getting rid of bed bugs is no easy task. It is very hard to get rid of bed bugs on your own. You'll more than likely have to hire a licensed exterminator that has experience getting rid of the insect. They will require you to bag and clean all clothing and bedding. The items will need to be washed in hot water and dried with the hottest setting for at least 30 minutes to kill bed bugs. Also, you will have to remove clutter and vacuum the floor, mattress, box springs and bed frames. When you are finished, IMMEDIATELY dump the contents of the sweeper or the filter bag into a plastic bag and take it outside to the trash can. Finally, you should purchase a zippered polyester mattress cover that traps any remaining bugs inside, starving them to death. You should leave the cover on for at least one year because bed bugs are known to survive for one year without feeding. Combining your efforts with the exterminator's actions you will win the battle against bed bugs.

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