

Bed Bug Training for Housecleaning Staff



Photo courtesy of M. Potter

Bed bugs can be found in any home. It doesn't matter how clean or how dirty the house is. Bed bugs spread by "hitch hiking" in suitcases, backpacks or bags, on furniture or other things brought from an infested home and on clothing or other things made from cloth. They can even travel in the vacuum cleaner you use to clean the home. You can help your clients by finding a bed bug infestation early and letting them know. **You will need training so you can find bed bugs when you're cleaning.**

You will want to be careful not to spread bed bugs to other homes you clean, the car you use, your office or your own home. Housecleaning agencies should ask clients if they think they might have bed bugs before cleaning begins. The agency should let you know about any homes that might have bed bugs so you can keep from spreading the bugs. You should also let the cleaning agency know if you have bed bugs in your own home.

Look for signs of bed bugs when cleaning:

- Bed bug babies are tiny and may be yellow or white. Bed bugs grow to be the color, size and shape of an apple seed. Bed bugs hide during the day, so you may not see any of the bugs themselves.



Photo by L. McCoy, Wake County

- Bed bug **eggs** are hard to see. They are tiny and white.
- Bed bug "marks" are brown, red or black spots or stains (blood and bed bug poop).
- Bed bug skins. Bed bugs leave skins behind as they grow.
- A sweet or musty smell.



Photo courtesy of M. Potter University of Kentucky

Bed bugs are good at hiding. You will need to pay special attention when cleaning:

- Mattresses and box springs when changing the sheets. Look closely at the mattress seams and bottom of the box springs near the head of the bed. Also look at the bed frame and behind the headboard when dusting.
- Look for bed bug "marks" on the sheets and bedding.
- Look for signs of bed bugs and "marks" when dusting or washing baseboards, electrical outlets, wall hangings, cracks and crevices in walls, drapes, corners of the room and windows and the area where the carpet touches the walls.



Photo by L. McCoy, Wake County

If you think the home might have bed bugs, ask your agency to let the client know right away. The client should ask a Pest Control Agency to inspect their home for bed bugs and let the cleaning agency know of the results of the inspection.

When cleaning each home, you will want to:

- Wear fitted clothing that can be washed and dried on high heat.
- **Look for signs of bed bugs during each cleaning and let the agency know right away if you think a home might have bed bugs.**
- Use different rags for dusting/cleaning each home. Put used rags in a sealed plastic bag until they can be washed. Wash and dry rags on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- Change vacuum bags after leaving each house. Throw the vacuum bag away in a trash can outside of the client's home. If you use the client's own vacuum cleaner, only change the bag if you think you may have seen bed bugs.
- Wash any linens (sheets, bedding, pillow cases, towels) you change in the client's own home. Wash and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- If you think you saw signs of bed bugs, look for "hitchhiking" bed bugs. Shake out your clothing, look for bed bugs on your clothes and change your shoes before entering your car. Put shoes in a sealed plastic bag. Put a towel, sheet or plastic bag on the seat of the car so your clothing will not touch the seat. When you get home, take off your clothes in your garage or just inside the door on a hard floor. Put the used clothing in a sealed plastic bag until it can be washed and dried on high heat.

If you know you will be cleaning an infested home, you should also:

- Wear disposable booties over your shoes.
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning.
- Throw away booties and gloves in a trash can outside of the client's home after leaving.
- Put a towel, sheet or plastic seat cover on the seat of the car so your clothing will not touch the seat. When you get home, take off your clothes in your garage or just inside the door on a hard floor. Put the used clothing in a sealed plastic bag until it can be washed and dried on high heat for 30 minutes.

Thank you for looking for bed bugs while you're cleaning. This will help keep you from spreading bed bugs to yourself and others !

Other things you can do that will help keep bed bugs from infesting your own home:

- Don't pick up furniture, mattresses, bedding or clothing that have been left on the street or in a dumpster.
- Use a flashlight to look for bed bugs on any furniture or other things you might want to buy from a flea market, yard sale or used goods store. Put all used bedding, linens, clothes and other cloth items in a sealed plastic bag. Wash and dry all cloth items on high heat before bringing them into your home.
- Check the mattress, box springs and headboard in your hotel/motel room for bed bugs. Keep your luggage, bags and clothes off the floor and beds. Keep them in the bathtub or on the luggage rack.
- Keep your home clean. Vacuum often. Wash and dry sheets on high heat once a week. Pick up clothes, toys, papers, and other clutter. Repair cracks and crevices in walls, ceilings and floors. Get rid of bats or wild birds that may be living in your attic.