

# BED BUG INFORMATION GUIDE



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## PURPOSE

Local and national media (TV, print, etc.) have commonly reported about bed bug infestations within hotels and motels, homes and apartment buildings. More recently, coverage has expanded to include commercial airplanes and some retail establishments (i.e. movie theaters and clothing stores). Difficult to eradicate, bed bugs can put your business' reputation at risk. And while bed bugs are **not** linked to any food safety concerns and haven't yet been an issue in supermarkets, the opportunity exists for employees and customers to introduce bed bugs into your store(s). This guide was created to educate the food retail industry on bed bugs and suggest early detection tools to help protect your business from an infestation.



## What's Going Around: BEDBUGS

**Bed bugs making  
a comeback**

**Bed bugs back - and biting**

## BACKGROUND: BED BUG HISTORY

Originally introduced to the U.S. with the early colonists, bed bugs first made their “comeback” about a decade ago in hotels and homes. With an increase in international travel, and a trend toward more targeted and less toxic pest control treatments, bed bugs may have built up a resistance to pesticides. In addition, removal of certain pesticides like organophosphates and carbamates from the market makes bed bugs harder to prevent and treat. Today, bed bugs have moved beyond the bedroom and into other environments, including apartments, offices and even retail establishments.

## APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

Adult bed bugs are about a quarter of an inch long, flat and have a broad oval shape like an apple seed. They are attracted to body heat and feed exclusively on blood. After feeding, they turn a reddish brown color and leave tell-tale stains behind. They prefer to reside within a five-foot radius of their host, most often humans, which make homes, apartments and hotel properties prime locations for bed bugs.

Bed bugs are often found in mattresses and box springs, behind headboards, and in couch cushions or other soft furniture. At night, they feed on human blood. They can live for long periods – more than a year – without a blood meal, which they must have for reproduction.



*Pictured: actual size of bed bug*

## HEALTH CONCERNS

Bed bugs have not been found to transmit diseases to their hosts, so they do not present a major health concern.<sup>1</sup> But, some people can experience skin irritations or, in severe cases, respiratory issues.<sup>2</sup>

## WHY RETAIL AND PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS SHOULD BE CONCERNED

Bed bugs are almost always introduced to an environment by human activity. If shoppers' or employees' homes, apartments or offices are infested, they could potentially transport bed bugs into your establishment. Bed bugs are great "hitchhikers"

and often get a ride into establishments on pant legs or personal belongings. Frequent travelers are often at risk as well. So, anyone who sets foot in your store could be bringing in a bed bug or two with them.

## WHERE TO LOOK

The most vulnerable areas within a store for a bed bug introduction include employee break rooms, offices or locker areas. These are the spots where employees are most likely to leave their belongings, which might be carrying bed bugs.

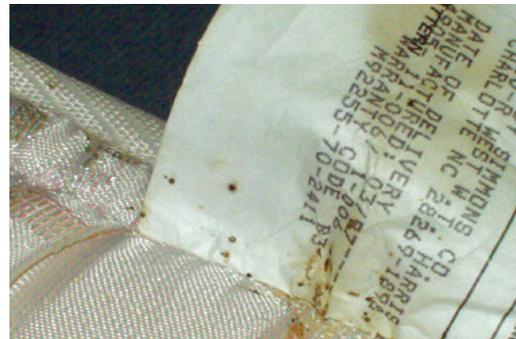


## SPOTTING THE SIGNS

Nocturnal in nature, bed bugs typically hide during the day, so it's difficult to spot them. Look for bed bugs, cast skins or the rust-colored stains they leave behind on couches in lounge areas, plush chairs in offices, or bundled phone and computer wires. Keep an eye out for potential hiding places, such as buckling wallpaper or carpet.

The good news is, retail stores are not the ideal environment for bed bugs because they don't provide the necessary elements or breeding conditions. Remember, bed bugs are active at night, do not travel great distances and require human blood to feed. Keep in mind:

- If you have one bed bug, that doesn't necessarily mean you have an infestation in your establishment.
- While there are people coming and going constantly in retail environments, there aren't any beds where people lie for bed bugs to feed.
- Clutter can be the perfect hiding place for bed bugs, but in retail environments, inventory is constantly moving and shifting around, so bed bugs have fewer places to hide.
- Bed bugs are not going to jump onto customers.
- Bed bugs prefer cool, dark environments. While retail establishments might have this conducive environment at night, people do not stay in the store overnight, so bed bugs are less of a concern at that time. An ideal "retail" location for bed bugs might be a movie theatre, where people sit for a few hours at a time in a cool, dark space.



## BED BUG PREVENTION

Unfortunately, bed bugs cannot be completely prevented because people can bring them into an establishment at any time on their personal belongings. And, bed bug presence has nothing to do with cleanliness or your establishment's sanitation practices. Early detection is the best thing you can do in the absence of true prevention options:

- 1) Train your staff to recognize the signs of bed bugs in their homes, apartments and office areas. Your pest control provider should provide this training free of charge.
- 2) Train your customer service staff assigned to product returns, such as clothing, bedding, stuffed animals, etc., to be vigilant and inspect for bed bugs.
- 3) Keep Human Resources considerations in mind. Encourage employees to notify your HR professional should they have a bed bug issue at home. This topic can be sensitive to broach, but encourage open communication about any issues.
- 4) Encourage your employees and maintenance staff to monitor for signs of bed bugs at your establishment and alert you immediately to any issues.
- 5) Report any potential signs to your pest management professional immediately. Should you spot a bed bug or, worse, have an infestation, they can provide a thorough inspection and work with you on a plan for remediation.

## RESOURCES

Orkin Commercial Services  
[www.orkincommercial.com](http://www.orkincommercial.com)  
**1.800.ORKIN NOW**

National Pest Management Association  
[www.pestworld.org/bed-bugs](http://www.pestworld.org/bed-bugs)

Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/bedbugs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/bedbugs.htm)

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> CDC. Joint Statement on Bed Bug Control in the United States from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed\\_bugs\\_CDC-EPA\\_Statement.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed_bugs_CDC-EPA_Statement.htm) (accessed 11-30-10)

<sup>2</sup> CDC. Bed Bugs  
<http://www.dpd.cdc.gov/dpdx/HTML/Bedbugs.htm> (accessed 11-30-10)

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