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Top Ten Tips to Prevent or Control Bed Bugs

Related Information

[Bed bugs tips \(to print\)](#)

[10 consejos útiles para eliminar las chinches de cama en español](#)

1. Make sure you really have bed bugs, not fleas, ticks or other insects.

You can compare your insect to the pictures on our [Identifying bed bugs](#) Web page or show it to your [local extension agent](#). EXIT (Extension agents are trained in pest control issues and know your local area.)

2. Don't panic!

It can be difficult to eliminate bed bugs, but it's not impossible. Don't throw out all of your things because most of them can be treated and saved. Throwing stuff out is expensive, may spread the bed bugs to other people's homes and could cause more stress.

3. Think through your treatment options -- Don't immediately reach for the spray can.

Be comprehensive in your approach. Try other things first. Integrated pest management (IPM) techniques may reduce the number of bed bugs and limit your contact with pesticides. If pesticides are needed, always follow label directions or hire a professional. There is help available to [learn about treatment options](#). (4 pp, 480 K, [About PDF](#))

4. Reduce the number of hiding places -- Clean up the clutter.

A cluttered home provides more places for bed bugs to hide and makes locating and treating them harder. If bed bugs are in your mattress, using special bed bug covers (encasements) on your mattress and box springs makes it harder for bed bugs to get to you while you sleep. Leave the encasements on for a year. Be sure to buy a product that has been tested for bed bugs and is strong enough to last for the full year without tearing.

5. Regularly wash and heat-dry your bed sheets, blankets, bedspreads and any clothing that touches the floor.

This reduces the number of bed bugs. Bed bugs and their eggs can hide in laundry containers/hampers. Remember to clean them when you do the laundry.

6. Do-it-yourself freezing may not be a reliable method for bed bug control.

While freezing can kill bed bugs, temperatures must remain very low for a long time. Home freezers may not be cold enough to kill bed bugs; always use a thermometer to accurately check the temperature. Putting things outside in freezing temperatures could kill bed bugs, but there are many factors that can affect the success of this method.

7. Kill bed bugs with heat, but be very careful.

Raising the indoor temperature with the thermostat or space heaters won't do the job. Special equipment and very high temperatures are necessary for successful heat treatment. Black plastic bags in the sun might work to kill bed bugs in luggage or small items, if the contents become hot enough. Bed bugs die when their body temperatures reaches 45°C (113°F). To kill bed bugs with heat, the room or container must be even hotter to ensure sustained heat reaches the bugs no matter where they are hiding.

8. Don't pass your bed bugs on to others.

Bed bugs are good hitchhikers. If you throw out a mattress or furniture that has bed bugs in it, you should slash or in some way destroy it so that no one else takes it and gets bed bugs.

9. Reduce the number of bed bugs to reduce bites.

Thorough vacuuming can get rid of some of your bed bugs. Carefully vacuum rugs, floors, upholstered furniture, bed frames, under beds, around bed legs, and all cracks and crevices around the room. Change the bag after each use so the bed bugs can't escape. Place the used bag in a tightly sealed plastic bag and in an outside garbage bin.

10. Turn to the professionals, if needed.

Hiring an experienced, responsible pest control professional can increase your chance of success in getting rid of bed bugs. If you hire an expert, be sure it's a company with a good reputation and request that it use an IPM approach. Contact your state pesticide agency for guidance about hiring professional pest control companies. Also, EPA's [Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety](#) provides information about IPM approaches, how to choose a pest control company, safe handling of pesticides, and emergency information.