

# Let's Beat the Bug!

## *Bed Bug Basics*

- Bed bugs are small insects, about the size of an apple seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, oval and reddish-brown in color. Juvenile bed bugs can be very small and hard to see.
- Bed bugs feed on human blood and can live for over a year without a meal.
- Bed bugs usually hide during the day near where people rest or sleep and then come out at night to feed. Bed bugs do not live on our bodies.
- Some people do not react when bitten by a bed bug.
- Most bed bugs are found within 8 feet of a person's resting place. As the infestation grows, bed bugs will spread further. You can find bed bugs in any of the following places:
  - In mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and bedding
  - In the cracks and crevices of furniture
  - Behind peeling wall paper
  - Behind pictures and clocks
  - In curtains
  - In cracks in hardwood floors
  - Under carpeting
  - Behind electrical outlets or switch plates

**For more information contact the Bed Bug InformationLine at 612-624-2200, 1-855-644-2200 [bedbugs@umn.edu](mailto:bedbugs@umn.edu), or visit [www.bedbugs.umn.edu](http://www.bedbugs.umn.edu)**

## Understanding Bed Bug Treatments

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There are a number of options to effectively get rid of bed bugs, but sometimes it can get confusing when trying to decide which option would be best for your situation. Here is some basic information regarding the two most common methods used by pest management companies to kill bed bugs.

### **Whole Room Heat Treatments**

Whole room heat treatments involve a Pest Management Professional (PMP) bringing in specially designed equipment to raise the temperature in your home to kill the bed bugs. Bed bugs and eggs die within 90 minutes at 118°F (48°C) or immediately at 122°F (50°C). During a heat treatment, the air temperature in the room is typically between 135°F (57.2°C) and 145°F (62.7 °C). The PMP will place remote thermometers throughout the home, to make sure the right temperatures are reached. The PMP watches the thermometers closely to ensure that it gets hot enough to kill bedbugs. A heat treatment typically takes between six and eight hours, depending on the condition of the area being treated.



During the heat treatment pets and any heat sensitive items that may melt or be damaged at temperatures up to 150°F degrees should be removed from the area being treated. Make sure you discuss this with your PMP as anything not treated with heat will need to be treated in another way.

Heat treatments do not offer any residual effects and your home could quickly become reinfested after a heat treatment if prevention steps are not taken.

Often, a residual insecticide will be applied to the border of the home/room being treated for bed bugs as a prevention step.

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## Insecticide Treatments

Insecticide treatments that are conducted thoroughly and correctly by a licensed PMP can be a very effective way of controlling bed bugs. Three different types of insecticides should be used in order to achieve the best result. There are many different brands of insecticides but one of each of the following broad categories should be used.

- A fast-acting, contact insecticide for use on surfaces that we frequently touch, i.e. sofas.
- A residual insecticide for inside furniture, cracks and crevices and the underside of surfaces we touch.
- A dust insecticide for cracks, crevices and voids, such as electrical outlets and baseboards.

Your PMP may offer other services such as container heat treatments, steam applications, or freezing infested items. Usually, items treated with these optional controls do not require an insecticide treatment and therefore fewer insecticides are needed.



A thorough insecticide treatment should involve 2-3 visits from the PMP, as it is unlikely all the bed bugs will be killed in the initial treatment. An insecticide treatment typically takes about 30 minutes to 2 hours per room depending on size and condition of the room. Once the treatment is complete you should wait until all the insecticides have dried before reentering your home, or until the PMP says it is safe to re-enter.

Before any treatment the PMP should provide you with a detailed list of instructions for how to prepare your home. It is very important to follow these directions closely as properly preparing the home is a very important step in any treatment process. Improper preparation is one of the main reasons that treatment for bed bugs fail.

We strongly recommend against trying to conduct an insecticide treatment for bed bugs by yourself. Controlling bed bugs with insecticides is a challenging and time consuming process which requires expertise and in many states a license is required to apply the insecticides which kill bed bugs. The insecticides that can be purchased in a hardware store, such as foggers, are not effective in controlling bed bugs and we strongly recommend against their use.

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By Amelia Shindelar and Dr. Stephen Kells, 2013

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In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651/201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529.

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