

Bed Bug Management

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What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, oval flattened insects – approximately 5mm long. They are light brown in colour when unfed and deep purple when fed on your blood. Bed bugs are nocturnal and usually feed just before dawn. They usually feed every two / three days and it takes each bed bug 10 minutes to feed. Bed bugs don't spread disease, but they are unpleasant and their bites may itch and swell. Please refer to figure 1 for an image of a bed bug.



Figure 1: A bed bug

Prevention

Ideally before moving into a new room, to reduce the risk of contamination clothes and bedding should be washed at 65 degrees. Alternatively, placing the clothes/bedding in a bag and placing in the freezer for 24 hours will also be effective. If you think you have been bitten, or see a bed bug, you should report this as soon as possible, so treatment can start as soon as possible.

If you are unclear whether there is a bed bug problem but want to make sure – you may want to use bed bug sniffing dogs! They have been trained to detect odours of live infestations. Further details at: <https://bedbughunters.co.uk/bed-bugs-sniffing-dogs/>

Bed bug treatment advice

Advice to assist bed bug treatment

- Establish a laundry system for exchanging bedding before bed bug treatment commences.
- Functional industrial washing machines are required to treat bed bugs (duvets will need washing). Consider maintenance costs as these will quickly become an issue in hostels.
- Provide free soap powder to encourage people to wash clothes.
- Provide protective equipment – overalls for staff to support clearances/ hot washing. Staff are advised wear big boots and ensure their trousers are not on the floor.
- Pay for additional staff to support team with room clearances/ hot washes.
- Share best practice around staying safe between work / home (change of clothes at home) e.g. Put any clothes used in a bag and directly into the dryer / or freezer to kill any possible bed bugs.
- Use peer pressure via residents meetings to discuss ways to reduce bed bugs.
- Having a 'hot wash at the booking in' would be ideal but is a difficult ask at the start of a tenancy. Particularly when someone comes in via a sideways move, with lots of belongings.

Pre - Treatment advice to client:

- Before placing belongings e.g. CD's, books into bags, these should be examined on a white sheet, in order to search for possible bed bugs. This sheet should be hot washed afterwards.
- Pull bed away from wall have a person available to help move the mattress and bed where required.
- Remove any wall-mounted items but do not take them out of the room.
- Remove linen from bed and base. These should be bagged and laundered do not put back in same bag (see below)
- Empty wardrobes and cupboards of items of clothing into bag keep in the room and clean if able if not inspect and replace
- Do not remove any items of furniture from the room. In most cases beds can be treated and do not need to be disposed of.
- If a mattress is torn and therefore difficult to treat, it should be disposed of. This will be discussed with client. The mattress should be rendered unusable, sealed and disposed of after being treated with insecticide.
- Vacuum the room thoroughly and empty the vacuum cleaner dispose of the contents in a bin bag.
- Please avoid going into other clients rooms to reduce spreading bed bugs to other areas.

Post - Treatment advice to client:

- Do not to enter treated rooms until spray is dry, in average conditions this should be about 4-6 hours. Sleeping in the bedrooms will encourage the bed bugs to emerge and come in contact with the insecticide. Bed bugs are attracted by body odour, temperature and the carbon dioxide we breathe out.
- Launder all affected clothing and bedding by washing at 60 degrees for 30 minutes and tumble dry at 40-45 degrees for 30 minutes. As an extra measure you can also wrap the affected clothing/ bedding in a plastic bag for 24 hours to suffocate the bed bugs.
- Diatomaceous earth, a non-toxic organic dust, should be used to treat electricals, e.g. televisions, radios and plug sockets (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Diatomaceous-Earth-Powder-Fresh-Sourced/dp/B00A49Z9CQ>)
- Repair any loose wallpaper and cracks and crevices.
- After treatment, seal cracks and crevices around wall floor junctions.
- Covering the mattress with a plastic or allergy-proof cover may help prevent re-infestation by reducing the harbourages. Some covers will trap bed bugs, causing them to die of starvation.
- Inform client that occasional bedbug bites may continue for 2 weeks after treatment from emerging bugs some times longer depending on level of infestation. It is recommended that the floors are not washed and treatment is not removed for 2 weeks.
- Carry out regular inspections to room by client after treatment for early detection.

Recommendations to reduce bed bug infestations

Mattresses

Bed bugs readily infest mattresses, with eggs being laid along the edges of or around buttons on a mattress. Investing in different mattresses may help. For instance Pineapple contracts provides a mattress with breathable synthetic material that can be wiped clean. They also have no seams for bed bugs to embed. The down side is that clients can complain they get hot in the summer, so it is advisable to use a mattress cover. Clients have been known to cut off the cover for reasons of anger or feeling hot. Passage House Assessment Centre provides a fan in each room to help with the heat.

The Polar mattress also comes in different depths for added comfort (<https://uk.pineapplecontracts.com/product/polar-mattress/?all&ajax>).

Another option is a vandal proof mattress called Scorpio (<https://uk.pineapplecontracts.com/product/scorpio-anti-vandal-mattress/?all&ajax>) which is a bit more expensive as it's more robust.

As already mentioned bed bugs live and lay their eggs in the edges/seams of mattresses, therefore it can be useful to use very strong chemicals to treat these areas and then isolate the mattress for a day before it can be reused because of the fumes it causes.

Bed Frames

Bed bugs live in the crevices of wood and come out at night to feed. The Pineapple Zurich bed frame (<https://uk.pineapplecontracts.com/product/zurich/>) is metal so won't harbour any bugs or their eggs. A general disinfectant should be used for wiping down the furniture.

Flooring

Carpets harbour all sorts of bugs so a vinyl floor covering called Altro which is non slip (<https://www.altro.co.uk/Floors>) is advisable. When fitted ensure it covers the area where a skirting board is for proper hygienic cleaning without crevices.

Bedroom Furniture

There are a number of other insects which can harbour in the doors and drawers of furniture, particularly cockroach eggs. Ordering wardrobes/ drawers without doors/ drawers could help. These are particularly useful as clients have been known to break the drawers and doors of furniture. It is also useful as when carrying out health & safety room checks, it is easy to see what's inside so it's easier to spot food harbouring and any other concerns.

Pineapple's range of open wardrobes: <https://uk.pineapplecontracts.com/product/hamble-plus-open-wardrobes>

Pineapple's range of open chest of drawers:

<https://uk.pineapplecontracts.com/product/hamble-plus-open-chest-of-drawers/?all&ajax>

Bedding

Mitre is a company whose prices are competitive and will give a discount for charities. The bedding is good quality and is fire retardant (https://www.mitrelinen.co.uk/bedroom/bed-linen/spectrum-bedding/_/a33-3). It is recommended to order dark colours such as burgundy, navy and brown for minimal stain issues.