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Preventing a Bed Bug Infestation

The classic signs of bed bug infestations are reddish colored bites that are itchy, dark fecal spotting and blood smears on bed linens, adult bugs, molts of the shell that are left behind, small bed bugs and tiny, whitish colored eggs. Bed Bugs are traveling insects, or "hitchhikers," and leaving your items lying around is the perfect way for them to crawl in and hitch a ride home with you. The following bed bug prevention tips will help you lower your chances of getting bed bugs:

- Wash and dry bedding and clothing regularly at the highest temperatures possible, 120 degrees or more is best.
- Vacuum floors regularly. Use the brush tool of your vacuum to vacuum your mattress. Use the crevice tool to vacuum crevices in mattresses and baseboards.
- Use a cloth mattress protector over your mattress and box springs to prevent you from having to treat or throw them away.
- Do not purchase or bring home any used furniture. If you do, make sure to examine it for signs of bed bugs. Pay special attention to dark fecal spots that may be on the inside seams and corners of used mattresses and bed frames.
- Check your bed for signs of bed bugs from time to time. Catching bed bugs early makes bed bug treatments easier and allows you to get rid of them faster.
- Store laundered items inside large, sealed Ziploc bags, air-tight containers or large trash bags. The best place to keep your bagged items is on cold tile floors of bathrooms and kitchens. The more you can clear away from a bed, couch or chair; and keep off of the floor, the better.
- Always keep personal belongings, such as your purse, bag, book bag, briefcase or coat on your lap whenever possible. Avoid putting these items on the floor, on another chair or coat rack.
When traveling, ask the hotel receptionist what their bed bug history is before making your travel selections. Before bringing your luggage in the room, check for signs of bed bugs. The head board is the first place to check for dark fecal spotting, along with picture frames above the bed, night stands and of course beds and chairs. Keep an eye on any peeled wall paper at the top of the walls and dark spotting from the fecal matter left behind.

If you suspect you or someone you know may have bed bugs, take extra precautions to identify the infestation and make sure it does not spread. Leave purses and bags at home or in your car before entering any place you suspect may have bed bugs. Before leaving, change your clothes and place them in a sealed Ziploc bag so that you do not bring bed bugs or their eggs in your car. After leaving, wash and dry your clothing immediately. Check any items or bags that you did bring in for signs of bed bugs. Treat these items if necessary, by washing and drying them, spraying or dusting them with a residual product, or have them fumigated.

To rest assured that there are no bed bugs in your home, the fastest and most accurate way to detect bed bug infestations is to contact your local pest management professional. You may find an expert in your area by going to www.ohiopma.org.