



What You Should Know About Bedbugs

What You Should Know About Bedbugs

Bedbugs are a growing, worldwide problem brought about by increased travel and decreased use of pesticides. Bedbugs have been found in five-star hotels, college residence halls, hospitals, and virtually all other types of housing throughout the United States. Given the nearly 7,000 students and summer visitors from around the world who live in UNL Housing each year, we are fortunate to have had only a few cases since bedbugs resurfaced on a large scale in the United States a few years ago. Our peer Big 10 schools as well as other schools across the state of Nebraska have reported cases of bedbugs.

What are bedbugs?

Bedbugs are small, flat, oval, wingless insects (about one-fifth of an inch in length) that are visible to the naked eye. They crawl at a steady rate. Like mosquitoes, they bite humans to feed on blood, but unlike mosquitoes, they do not transmit disease. They are hardy creatures that can live for up to 18 months without feeding and are able to withstand extreme temperature changes. Bedbugs are so named



because they are nocturnal and thrive best in beds where people sleep. During the day, they hide in crevices, bed frames, mattresses and box springs, behind electrical outlet covers and picture frames, inside drawers of furniture, within pleats of curtains, in clothes discarded on the floor, and in other spaces where they are not easily detected. The first sign of a bedbug is often a rash or bite mark and blood spots on linens.

How are bedbugs brought onto campus?

Bedbugs are generally not carried on your person, but they can be carried in personal possessions such as bedding, suitcases, backpacks, boxes, and furniture.

Where do bedbugs live?

Bedbugs do not only live in beds. They can live in very tiny spaces such as:

- In seams of mattresses, around the bed frame
- Between cracks and crevices of walls and floor moldings, baseboards
- Electrical outlets, underneath or inside electronics
- Where carpeting adjoins walls
- In furniture (futons, bean bags, etc.)
- Backpacks, clothes baskets/hampers, suitcases, etc.

But I thought bedbugs happened only to dirty people?!

This is a common misconception. Bedbugs do not have a preference of sanitary conditions. Reduce clutter which provides places for bedbugs to hide, especially under and around the bed.

What can I do to help?

We need your assistance to avert and contain future cases. As bedbugs are brought into buildings in the belongings of people, here is what you can do to help:

- *Learn to identify bedbugs.* Review the section of this fact sheet that describes bedbugs and consult other resources listed below so you can identify bedbugs. Also be on the lookout for signs of their presence such as blood spots on sheets or an unexplained “rash” on your body.
- *Inspect your bed periodically.* Check for blood spots on your sheets. Lift bedding and mattress. Check seams, between bedposts and slats, and behind headboards. Use a flashlight at night.
- *Inspect your backpack periodically.* Bedbugs can hide in backpacks. Check seams and pouches throughout your backpack for bugs or eggs. Do not place your backpack on or under your bed.
- *Clean and reduce the clutter in your room* to eliminate places for bedbugs to hide during the day.
- *Wash clothes and linens frequently* in hot water and dryer to kill any possible bugs. The items should be washed in water 120 degrees or greater, as it is the extreme heat that will actually kill the bedbugs, not the water itself. The same rule applies to drying items. They should also be dried at 120 degrees or greater.
- *Don't bring second-hand furniture carpet or rugs onto campus.* They can be common breeding grounds for bedbugs.
- *When traveling, take precautions* to help prevent bringing bedbugs back to campus with you. Inspect the bed you will be using as described above. Check the room, including behind wall hangings. Don't put your suitcase or backpack directly on your bed; whenever possible, elevate them on a luggage rack.
- Before returning to campus, *inspect your clothes and other items before packing.* Check crevices in suitcases and backpacks.
- After returning to campus, *re-check all traveling gear and items within when you unpack.* Don't put your suitcase or backpack on or under your bed.

How do I know if I have bedbugs?

Since bedbugs are hard to spot because they are small and nocturnal, often the first sign of them is bites. These bites can come from many sources besides bedbugs, so if you suspect that bedbugs are present, it is important to investigate.

- Check the mattress - bed bugs leave blood marks, dark fecal spots, eggs, and egg shell casings in the mattress, particularly on the seams.
- Bites on your body - bed bugs leave small bite marks, usually in a tight line of multiple bites. They may itch, and look like other insect bites.

What SHOULD I do if I think I have bed bugs?

- If you suspect bedbugs, call your residence hall/complex 24-hour desk immediately.
- A Housing Facilities staff member will inspect your room and determine the appropriate course of action to resolve the issue.
- We may bring a specially-trained dog to your room to assist in the inspection process.

What SHOULDN'T I do if I believe I have bed bugs?

- Don't panic! Although bed bugs can be annoying, they can be battled safely and successfully if you follow all guidelines given to you by University Housing staff.
- Don't wait! Call your residence hall/complex 24-hour desk immediately.
- Do not apply pesticides on your own. The University hires a licensed pest control operator to confirm the case and develop an integrated pest management plan.
- Do not go sleep in a friend's room or in places off-campus. If you actually have bed bugs, you could spread them to others.
- Don't be ashamed or embarrassed to discuss bedbugs. They are not an indicator of how clean/unclean you are. It's better to get the proper people involved instead of ignoring potential bedbug outbreaks.
- Other resources. There are many good resources on bedbugs. Check the website listed below or search for "bedbugs" online.

University of Nebraska Extension
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/>

Our commitment to you. We hope that the information in this fact sheet provides you a better understanding of this problem, the actions Housing is taking to address it, and what you can do to help. Please know that everyone on our staff is committed to doing everything possible to manage the impact of this worldwide problem on our campus.

What is University Housing doing in the future?

University Housing will be providing education for students during the fall semester move-in process each year. Residence Life leaders will provide information on the following:

- What you should know about bedbugs
- How you can help prevent bedbugs
- How to detect bedbugs
- What to do if you suspect you may have bedbugs
- How to prepare for University Housing's bedbug detection process
- How to prepare for University Housing's treatment process
- Other resources available to learn more

Along with our education materials and process, University Housing will be conducting residence hall room and building inspections.

End of summer/pre-fall semester inspections

- After summer conferences and camps leave campus, University Housing will perform inspections on all residence hall rooms, offices and common areas for bedbugs. If any bedbugs are found, University Housing will heat treat the room so that fall residents can be confident that they are moving into a bedbug-free room.

End of spring semester/pre-summer inspection

- After students leave campus in May, University Housing will perform inspections on all residence hall rooms, offices and common areas for bedbugs. If any bedbugs are found, University Housing will heat treat the room so that summer guests and residents can be confident that they are staying in a bedbug-free room.

Periodic student reminders

- Semester break and spring break student refresher
- Clean your room and bedding reminder
- Backpack and room inspection reminder
- Do not bring in used furniture, appliances or clothing reminders

Banned items

- Second-hand furniture or carpet
- Pest control chemicals

Visit our website at <http://housing.unl.edu/bedbugs/> for complete information on our bedbug protocol, detection, eradication, prevention and education.

University Housing
1115 N. 16th St.
Lincoln NE 68588
402-472-3561
email: housing@unl.edu