

## WHAT IS A BED BUG?

Bed bugs are small, oval, reddish brown, non-flying insects that feed by sucking blood from humans or animals. They can live in any area of the home and can reside in tiny cracks in furniture as well as on linens and upholstered furniture. Bed bugs most often feed on people at night while they are asleep in their beds. They generally concentrate in beds, including the mattresses, box springs and bed frames.

## WHAT DOES A BITE LOOK LIKE?

Bed bugs will normally bite near the waistline or other areas where clothing fits tightly to the body or where skin is exposed. The face, neck, hands and arms are common sites for bed bug bites.

- Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but later turn into small, flat or raised bumps.
- Redness, swelling and itching are common.
- These small white to red welts do not have a red spot in the center like flea bites.
- A peculiarity of bed bug bites is the tendency to find several bites lined up in a row.

## ARE BED BUGS DANGEROUS?

Although bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease. Typically, no treatment is required for bed bug bites. If itching is severe, steroid creams or oral antihistamines may be used for symptom relief. However, if you are concerned about insect bites, you can call the Thomson Student Health Center at 803-777-3175.

## PROTECTION TIPS FOR TRAVEL

- **Research hotels and hostels ahead of time.** Before you go, check any hotels or hostels you might stay at on websites like tripadvisor.com, hotelchatter.com and bedbugregistry.com to see if anyone has reported a bed bug infestation.
- **Choose the right luggage.** Bed bugs prefer fabrics over metals and plastics, and are small enough to squeeze through closed zippers. Thus, experts recommend using hard luggage that closes tight.
- **Protect your clothes.** Seal your clothes inside air-tight bags.
- **Protect your luggage.** Never set your luggage on the bed or on a couch. Put your luggage on a luggage rack or a hard, light-colored surface that is clear of bed bugs.
- **Check your room.** Pull bedding aside and check mattresses for fecal stains, eggs, molted exoskeletons and bugs. Bed bugs also hide in headboards, drapes, furniture, cracks near wall trim, behind picture frames, etc.
- **Unpack safely.** Do not bring your suitcase into your bedroom or living room and never unpack on a bed or sofa. Unpack directly into your washing machine or on a hard, light-colored surface so you can spot bed bugs.
- **Launder clothes immediately.** Even if you didn't wear all of the clothes you packed, wash them all as soon as you get home.
- **Treat your luggage before you store it.** After you have unpacked, vacuum your luggage thoroughly. Also, if it is hot outside, you can seal your luggage in black trash bags and let them sit in the trunk of your car for a few hours. The temperature must reach 115°F for at least 7 minutes.

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## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A BEDBUG PROBLEM?

Go to FIXX online at [www.housing.sc.edu/fixx.asp](http://www.housing.sc.edu/fixx.asp) and submit a work order. After the work order is received, University Housing will follow the protocol below.

- A pest control company will be contacted to inspect the area and confirm the problem.
- If bed bugs are detected, a pest control company will be scheduled to treat the room after the residents have been contacted and instructed on preparation procedures.
- Students should empty all clothes out of drawers and from closets, put them into sealed bags and wash them. All linens including curtains, bed sheets, pillowcases and comforters should also be washed in hot water and put in the dryer on the hottest setting.
- University Housing staff will assist in moving furniture away from walls and disassembling the bed for treatment.
- Staff will remove old bedding including the box spring and mattress and remove cover plates from outlets.
- Housing will assign affected students to temporary housing until treatment is done.
- The pest control company will treat the room and furniture.
- Staff will re-assemble the bed, put the cover plates back on and replace the bedding units.
- Students will be informed when they can re-enter the room.

Place bed bug infested clothing in the washer or dryer directly from a sealed bag to prevent an infestation of the laundry facility. Wash and dry all clothing on the high heat setting.



## HOW DO BED BUGS SPREAD?

Bed bugs are spread by people. Bed bugs can live on clothing from infested homes and may be spread by a person unknowingly wearing infested clothing. They can also live in furniture, clothing or bedding for up to one year so they or their eggs may be present in used furniture or clothing. They spread by crawling and moving place to place and may contaminate multiple rooms in a residence or even multiple dwellings in buildings. They may also be present in boxes, suitcases or other goods that are moved from residence to residence or from a hotel to a residence.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF A ROOM IS INFESTED?

Often people notice itchy skin welts, see the bed bugs themselves, notice small bloodstains from crushed insects or see dark spots associated with their presence. However, it is often hard to see them because they hide in or near beds, other furniture and in cracks, and typically come out at night for feeding. For that reason, University Housing relies on a licensed pest control specialist to make a determination, and one is dispatched whenever a report is made of a possible case of bed bugs.

It is a common myth that dirty conditions lead to bed bugs, however, this simply isn't true. Cluttered conditions can make it harder to identify bed bug infestation, but the dirtiness of the room itself does not cause the infestation.

## HOW DO I PREVENT BED BUGS?

- Most bed bugs are spread through travel. When traveling, take steps to avoid picking up bed bugs.
- Do not buy used furniture or pick up discarded furniture and bring it into your residence.
- Periodically inspect bedding and typical harborage sites for bed bugs.
- Vacuum carpets, under beds and in small crevices. Dispose of the vacuum bag properly.
- Keep sheets and other bedding items clean.
- Keep bed skirts and other bedding from touching the floor.

If students suspect they have bed bugs, they should go to FIXX online at [www.housing.sc.edu/fixx.asp](http://www.housing.sc.edu/fixx.asp) and complete a maintenance work order and then notify the Residence Hall Director or the Residence Life Coordinator for their building or e-mail [housing@sc.edu](mailto:housing@sc.edu).