

# Bed Bugs

The incidence of bed bugs is on the rise!

Bed bug cases have doubled in 2021. On top of that, according to Rentokil (A bed bug remediator) 44% of hotels currently do not have a bed bug remediation plan in place\*. There are many factors impacting this, but the primary reasons are:

1. Reduced Housekeeping Staff and Other staff positions filling in for job positions they are not familiar with. This in turn leads to a potential of not knowing what signs to look out for. Some staff may not know how to report a bed bug outbreak.
2. Reduced cleaning. Many hotels have opted to not clean guest rooms during a guest stay due to new protocols. The lack of daily room cleaning can easily cause a small outbreak to turn into a large-scale outbreak. Bed bugs travel fast, which means they easily travel from room to room. Reduced cleaning may be here to stay, so what do we do?

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## WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

Bed bugs date back to the 1600's. The bugs have many stages but are easily identifiable. The most obvious things to look for are something that looks like a grain of rice or an Appleseed – bed bugs are very flat. While bed bugs cannot jump, they do walk quickly and they do replicate very fast. These pests arrive at a hotel on people and things – guests, luggage, employees, delivery people or packages, etc. Bed bugs are very mobile and attach to things very easily.



## WHAT SHOULD HOTEL STAFF LOOK FOR?

- Know the signs. Look for signs of bugs in the bed shell, folds of the mattress and box spring. Be familiar with each stage of the life cycle.
- A guest that had a reaction may have raised, red, itchy welts. Some people may not react at all. Some guests may have a delayed reaction.
- To confirm a guest was bit by a bed bug, **there must be evidence in the room**. A guest could be bit by any number of pests or had a reaction to something. If they file a claim for a bed bug, a hotel should have detailed cleaning records that indicate if a room was checked for pests, including bed bugs.

### WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN A GUEST IS BIT BY BED BUGS?

- They may have bites/welts on their body
- They may need medical treatment
- Many guests that have been bitten by bed bugs seek psychological treatment
- The guest's home may need to be treated as part of the claim.
- Some cases of bed bugs have led to MRSA and Sepsis, and potentially death.

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### WHAT SHOULD A HOTEL DO IF BED BUGS ARE IDENTIFIED?

- Immediately take the room out of service.
- Contact your Bed Bug Remediation/Pest Management Company
- Inspect neighboring rooms
- Confirm that the bug really is a bed bug – there are many similar looking bugs that do not bite. Ensure a specimen is taken. **A false report can lead to a bad review for the hotel. Most travelers will not stay at a hotel that has even one report of bed bugs. One negative review reduces room value, on average, by \$38 a night.**

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### HAVE A PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM READY IN CASE YOU HAVE AN OUTBREAK

1. Conduct a Risk Assessment of your property. Review high risk areas, create a remediation plan with your pest control contractor.
2. Staff Education. This is a high priority. Core staff should know how to identify bed bugs, how to report and how to respond to guests. Positions include HR, Housekeeping, Janitorial, Front Desk and maintenance.

3. Contract with a Pest Management Specialist, specializing in bed bugs. Hire contractor in advance to treat and prevent bed bugs. It is much easier to handle a situation when you are already working with a specialist. Regular treatment is key. Prevention includes pre-treatment of deterrent, physical removal and treatment of bugs, ongoing protection, use of an activated box spring liner. If bugs ingest the chemical, they will spread it to the other bugs, which will in turn eliminate the bugs.
4. Plan of Action with Pest Management Specialist. Have a guest protocol for impacted guests. Ensure staff know who to call and what to do. What are the procedures? What is the treatment? Have instructions for impacted guests to follow. Note all personal items and follow up with guests. File a claim with your insurance carrier promptly and document the entire process from start to finish.
5. **Routine Inspections are CRITICAL.** Infestations will be caught early. Establish a frequency and ensure all staff are aware of what to look for, where and how often. Employees are the first line of defense and key to early detection. They should be appropriately trained at multiple intervals.

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\*For additional information, visit:  
<https://www.rentokil.com/us/bed-bug-control/>

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