Managing Bedbugs on Campus

It is becoming fairly commonplace to find bedbugs in public and private work places. Why? Bedbugs are small and they like to hide. Anyone could carry them into your building on their clothing, personal belongings and shoes. However there is no need to panic if you find them. Properly managed, the bedbugs can be eliminated with a minimum of disruption to your living environment.

Below are some facts and strategies to adopt if you are experiencing an occurrence of bedbugs.

**Know some basic facts about bedbugs.**
- Bedbugs do not fly (they don’t have wings!).
- Bedbugs cannot jump.
- Bedbugs crawl fast.
- Bedbugs like to hide and do NOT like light, if you see a bug crawling around in the light, it is most likely not a bedbug.
- Bedbugs feed on human and animal blood.
- Mature bedbugs can survive for several months without a blood meal.
- Bedbugs are attracted to the heat and carbon dioxide we produce.
- Bedbugs are not known to transmit disease.
- Bedbugs are nocturnal insects, except in buildings where the carbon dioxide levels are at their highest during the day.

**What do bedbugs or their bites look like?**
- Bedbugs are reddish brown and shaped like a tick.
- Bedbug eggs and juveniles are tiny, but visible. (A flashlight and magnifying glass make them easier to see.)
- About 70% of the people bitten by bedbugs will develop itchy welts. These welts typically occur in groups or clusters on exposed skin, but otherwise they look like other insect bites.

**Where would bedbugs hide?**
- Because bedbugs like to hide, it is important to know where to look for them.

**Check the following areas:**
  - the folds and seams in upholstery
  - the seams of your mattress and cracks and crevices in bed frames
  - floor baseboards
  - desk chair
  - wall joints and corners
  - electrical outlets and switches
  - piles of papers and other nooks and crannies
- If you find bedbugs, contact your resident director.
- Do not crush or try to kill the bedbugs, it is impossible to make a positive identification from smashed bug parts! Put the live bug(s) in a tightly sealed plastic bag or between 2 pieces of scotch tape so that physical plant and pest management professionals can make a positive identification.

**What if bedbugs are found?**
- DO NOT PANIC. Bedbugs are a pest, but they shouldn’t be a cause for panic.
- When one or two bedbugs are found, most people assume that there are many more in the building, which isn’t always the case.
- Remember that bedbugs do not transmit disease.
How will they treat for bedbugs?
- Once the presence of bedbugs has been confirmed in your room, pest management professionals will be scheduled to come and treat the room.
- Sometimes there is a couple of days delay between when the bedbugs may be found and when the exterminators can heat treat your room. In that case, the exterminators would apply an alcohol-based suppressant throughout your room to kill live bugs and prevent other bedbugs from coming out – they will not walk through this barrier. This is a short term solution. You cannot be in your room while this is being applied, or for about 15 minute afterwards.
- On the day when they heat, you have to leave your room for bulk of the day. You will need to determine what items you absolutely need for that day. Only take what is absolutely necessary, because you want as much as possible to be treated. For example, if you don’t need your books for class and can live with just paper for notes, leave your books behind to be treated. Please leave purses and book bags in the rooms.
- The night before, take the clothes that you plan to wear the next day (including shoes) and a towel and anything you might need and put it through a dryer cycle – do not return these things to your room once they’ve been heated. Keep them in a friend’s room which is bedbug free.
- Get out any “meltable” items that you may be worried about, i.e., cosmetics, chocolate, medicine, crayons, etc., and leave out on your desk or dresser – the professionals from the extermination company will determine how long they can be heated to be safe and will remove them from the heat as necessary.
- Please be aware that this is an intrusive process. The company will be opening every drawer and removing clothes, etc., to make sure that each article of clothing and drawer in the room reaches the appropriate temperature to eliminate the bedbugs. Unfortunately, your room will likely be in some disarray when you return.
- After the heat treatment, the pest management professionals will return with a detection dog to determine that the bedbugs have been eradicated.

What if I had them here, how do I prevent taking them home?
- When you visit home, meet someone with a change of clothes in the garage or immediately inside the door and then immediately put your clothes in the dryer, on a high setting, for at least 30 minutes.

What if I think I have bedbugs at home?
- Be extremely diligent about what you take home and what you bring back to school with you. Let your “at home” belongings stay at home and your “at school” belongings stay here.
- Do not take your laundry home to wash. If you bring clothes with you from home, run them through a dryer cycle as soon as you return to school.
- Do not bring furniture, suitcases, cardboard boxes, etc. with you from home. Please only bring things that can be put through a dryer. If you have items that you must have at school that can’t be put in the dryer, contact Residence Life or Physical Plant – we have a heating box that can kill bedbugs.

What if someone on my floor, a friend, or my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner has bedbugs?
- First, remember that bedbugs can happen to anyone and dealing with a friend or floor mate who has bedbugs requires sensitivity. People may feel ashamed that they have the bugs, and they are reluctant to talk about their problem with anyone.
- Blaming or accusing others won’t solve the problem. Getting bedbugs is no one’s fault.

Content adapted from the Central Ohio Bedbug Task Force. centralohiobedbugs.org