



ISSUE Insights



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE CALIFORNIA APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

Bedbugs on Residential Rental Property

In recent years there has been a resurgence of bed bug infestations throughout the United States. This is generally believed to be the result of increased global travel and discontinuation of the use of certain pesticides. According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), bed bug infestations have been found in hotels, nursing homes, public housing, apartment complexes, moving vans, jails, furniture rental stores, dormitories, and other multi-unit dwellings.

What are Bedbugs?

Bed bugs are small wingless insects, approximately one-fourth of an inch long that feed on blood, normally during the night.

How does a property become infested with bed bugs?

In most cases, bed bugs are moved from infested areas to non-infested areas on clothing, luggage, furniture, or bedding that is brought into homes.

Where are bedbugs found?

Most, but not all, of a bedbug population will congregate in cracks and crevices near where humans and pets sleep or rest. Bedbugs live in furniture such as couches, easy chairs, dressers, and night tables, as well as electronic devices such as alarm clocks and radios. Infestations of bed bugs are not limited to bedrooms and hotels; they can be found in public transportation, hospitals, and long-term care facilities.

What are the indicators of a bedbug infestation?

Evidence of a bedbug infestation includes the presence of bedbugs or their cast exoskeletons, and blood spots/stains on bedding, walls, or upholstered furniture. Bedbugs are found most often around areas where a person sleeps or rests. These areas include: on or near beds and bedroom furniture; in the tufts, seams, and folds of mattresses and daybed covers; and in clutter around sleeping areas. In more severe infestations, bedbugs may spread to cracks and crevices in bed frames and box springs and may be found behind headboards, inside nightstands, and behind baseboards, pictures, and moldings. Bedbugs may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, and around pet sleeping areas. Bedbugs can live many months without a blood meal while hiding in cracks and crevices.

Are bedbugs dangerous? Do they carry disease?

Bedbugs are not known to transmit disease. However, bed bug bites can cause large, itchy welts on the skin. A person's reaction to insect bites is an immune response and, therefore, varies from person to person. Bedbug bites are usually painless and rarely awakens a sleeping person. If people are sleeping side by side, one person may have a severe reaction while the other shows no evidence of being bitten.



Sometimes the red welts caused by the bites will not be apparent until many days after a person was bitten. Bedbug bites can lead to secondary skin infections. According to CDPH, some individuals report significant psychological distress, disruption of sleep, nervousness, and agitation when dealing with a bedbug infestation.

What can I do to prevent bedbugs?

CAA has developed a [Bedbug Addendum](#) to the Rental/Lease Agreement that outlines tenant responsibilities, which will greatly decrease the likelihood of bedbug infestation and help to control the problem if it does occur. Use of the addendum may also make it easier to prove a tenant's liability if the tenant has not complied with the duties listed therein.

Bedbugs have been discovered in one of the units on my property. What are my, and the tenant's rights and responsibilities?

Pests, including bedbugs are a habitability issue. Accordingly the owner or manager needs to deal with it promptly. A qualified pest control operator may be able to offer an opinion as to the source of the bedbugs (i.e., due to a higher concentration in the mattress in Unit B, than in other units). If fault can be determined, an owner may want to try to recover some costs from the responsible resident. However, even if it is a particular tenant's fault, if it spreads to other units due to lack of prompt action from the owner, the owner may be liable to those other residents.

How does someone get rid of bedbugs?

The CDPH recommends that property owners hire a licensed pest control professional to evaluate what type of pest is present and to exterminate them if necessary. Time and money can be wasted attempting to eliminate an infestation if an insect is not identified properly. Controlling and removing bedbugs involves different procedures than the removal of other pests and will require multiple visits. A pest control professional should perform a thorough inspection, and when bedbug hiding places are found, provide at least one chemical or non-chemical means of control to the infested rooms every two weeks, for three consecutive weeks. A professional may also use pesticides and specialized equipment, such as steam cleaners, to kill the bedbugs. It is important to cooperate fully with all of the pest control company's recommendations. All materials removed from a bedbug infested room should be placed in plastic garbage bags before being thrown away, taken to a laundry facility, or otherwise treated. This will prevent bedbugs from being moved to other areas of the structure. Licensed applicators should provide proof of their licensure and their company's licensure upon request. Visit <http://www.pestboard.ca.gov/license> to confirm that the company is certified.

Where can I get more detailed information about preventing and controlling bedbugs?

The California Department of Public Health has issued guidelines that provide recommendations on how to control active bedbug infestations, minimize the spread bedbugs and prevent future infestations. The essential components of bedbug control and prevention are: • identification of bedbug infestations • utilization of best available bedbug treatment strategies and prevention measures, and cooperation between all stakeholders affected by a bedbug infestation. The Guidelines include specific information applicable to landlords and tenants of residential rental property.

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/BB%20Guidelines.pdf>

Additional Information about Bedbugs, Including Pictures for Identification:

[Http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/bedbugs.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/bedbugs.aspx)

