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Written on JULY 18, 2013 AT 11:29 AM by VKREMER

Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite!

Filed under: FAMILIES, HEATH, PUBLIC HEALTH

(ONE COMMENT)

By Lt. Jen Wright, *Navy Entomology Center of Excellence*



This photograph of a bed bug contains the tell tale black and red droplets left by bed bugs.

No one likes that sneaking suspicion upon returning from a vacation that perhaps you have brought back more than a great tan and some fanciful knick knacks. That perchance those abhorrent little hitch hikers that strike fear in the heart of travelers worldwide have made their way home with you ... bed bugs.

Bed bugs were a major problem in United States prior to the 1950's however the advent of DDT and other broad-spectrum insecticides led to the practical disappearance of bed bugs

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until the mid 1990's when the pests started showing up once again on the east coast of the U.S. With the increased accessibility of global travel, these little blood suckers have made a dramatic resurgence and they are no longer limited to the seedy under belly of road side motels. Four star hotels and fancy neighborhoods are not immune to bed bug infestations so it is important to be ever vigilant when traveling.

The good news is that you are not defenseless against these unwanted house guests. As the summer travel season begins there are a few practical steps that you can take while traveling to help avoid an accidental infestation. The first step is to always be aware of your surroundings. The most common place to find bed bugs is in the seam of the mattress and in the headboard. So before I ever unpack I check around the seam of the bed and make sure there are no red or black spots in the seam. The presence of these drops could mean that bed bugs have been resting and defecating in the area. Note that the absence of these spots DOES NOT mean there are not bed bugs, it just means there is not an obvious infestation.

The next and probably most important thing to consider is where you place your luggage. I always use the luggage rack in hotels and ensure that my luggage is completely off of the ground. Then I place the luggage as far from the bed as I can since I know that bed bugs tend to stay close to the areas they feed in. Simply taking these steps will help a great deal but will not ensure that these creatures will never make it home with you.

If you do happen to find yourself the unwanted host bed bugs you should call a professional immediately. Bed bugs can be highly resistant to insecticides and most homeopathic remedies will not rid your home of these resilient creatures. One of the most effective treatments is heat. Pest professionals will come into your home remove heat sensitive items and then raise your home's internal temperature to a level that bed bugs are not able to tolerate. These treatments often cost thousands of dollars so preventative measures such as those listed above are essential. If your unit has an issue with bed bugs in barracks or on a ship please contact the Navy Entomology Center of Excellence at NECEfleetsupport@med.navy.mil.

For more information please visit the [Navy Entomology Center of Excellence of Excellence](#).

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Jannah Fernando
 I hate bed bugs. They are my problem when I am trying to get some sleep. I really hate the bites I get from these bed bugs. -<http://www.deadhotbugs.com/>

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