

PEST CONTROL

TOP 10 BED BUG MYTHS

BED BUGS—the mere mention of the pests can elicit all kinds of reactions from people, from squirming and itching to a demonstrative, “Ewww!” Since the resurgence of the blood-sucking bug over the past few years, experts, some real and some not, have come out of the woodwork to proclaim all they know about bed bugs. As with any major occurrence, there is certainly no shortage of bed bug myths, which, in our online culture, can spread like wildfire.

The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) has been on a mission to dispel the many myths that surround the bed bug comeback and provide accurate information to educate the public. NPMA hopes that the public, armed with facts, will practice vigilance to help minimize infestations and the spread of bed bugs.

The NPMA offers these top 10 bed bug myths and truths.

1. BED BUGS ARE ONLY FOUND IN BEDS. Bed bugs can be found in chair cushions, sofas, behind electrical outlets, cracks and crevices around baseboards, or even behind picture frames. Because of their hitchhiking nature, bed bugs go beyond homes and hotels, and can be found in retail stores, offices, places of worship, college dorms, hospitals, daycares, libraries, modes of transportation, movie theaters, laundry facilities, and other places where humans live and gather.

2. BED BUGS ARE A SIGN OF POOR HYGIENE OR SANITATION. Bed bugs don't discriminate and have been found in world-class hotels and budget properties alike, as well as wealthy neighborhoods and less affluent communities.

3. BED BUGS SPREAD DISEASE. Bed bugs are not known to spread any diseases to humans. However, their bites can leave behind itchy, red welts that can become infected from scratching.

4. BED BUGS CAN BE TREATED WITHOUT THE HELP OF A PEST PROFESSIONAL. Bed bugs do not respond to over-the-counter treatment options. Any effective bed bug control strategy should start with a careful, thorough inspection by a pest control professional of all known and suspected spots where the bugs may be harboring. The pest control professional will develop a treatment and control strategy with the customer depending on the extent of the infestation.

5. BED BUG INFESTATIONS ARE EASY TO TREAT. Bed bugs are the most difficult pest to treat, according to 76 percent of survey respondents, more so than cockroaches, ants, and

termites. Depending on the scope of an infestation and the type of treatment used by a pest professional, it can take several treatments to completely eliminate bed bugs.

6. BED BUGS ARE NOT VISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE. Although they may be difficult to find because they hide well, bed bugs are big enough to be seen with the naked eye. Adult bed bugs are about a quarter-inch long and look similar to a flat apple seed in size and appearance, mahogany to rusty brown in color. Additionally, the first sign of bed bug infestations is the appearance of small brownish or reddish dots on bed linens. These are bed bug fecal spots or droppings on the surface of linens.

7. BED BUGS ARE ONLY ON THE EAST COAST. Pest control companies have reported bed bug activity on a national scale. Bed bugs are being found from the East to the West Coast and everywhere in between. Specifically, the pests were encountered by 17 percent of NPMA's Bed Bugs in America survey respondents in the Northeast; 20 percent in the Midwest; 20 percent in the South; and 19 percent in the West.

8. GETTING RID OF THE INFESTED BED AND FURNITURE WILL ELIMINATE THE INFESTATION. Unfortunately, bed bugs are pesky critters and they are able to crawl into very small crevices in and around the human environment, such as between mattresses, in seams in bed linens, upholstery, behind wood trim, inside electrical boxes, in floors, and behind wallpaper, among other hard to find locations. So merely washing bed linens or other infested areas or throwing away beds or furniture might not eliminate the source of the bed bugs. Bed bugs are also excellent at relocating by hitching rides in luggage, boxes, shoes, and any other mobile materials.

9. SLEEPING IN A WELL-LIT ROOM WILL PREVENT BED BUGS FROM BITING. While bed bugs typically feed at night on bare skin that is exposed while sleeping, they are opportunistic insects and will consume a blood meal during the day, especially in heavily-infested areas. It is also important to note that bed bugs can go a year without a blood meal.

10. BED BUG BITES CAN BE FELT. Bed bugs are successful nighttime feeders because of their biological makeup. While feeding, bed bugs first inject their victim with their saliva, which contains an anesthetic, numbing the area around the bite, and follow with an anticoagulant that allows the blood to flow freely.