

## **Bed Bugs: A Traveler's Warning**

Bed Bugs used to be thought of as a “dirty persons” problem or something you could come in contact with only by staying in “seedy motel”. Those who travel over seas are aware of the bed bug problem. Well, regardless of your hygiene or the cleanliness of the hotel you are staying in, chances are if you travel much, you will be exposed to Bed Bugs. Five years ago we never had a “Bed Bug call” to our office. Not any more, and it is a problem nationwide. Even five star hotels have had bed bugs issues.

Bed Bugs (*cimex letularious*) are oval shaped, nocturnal, brown to red-brown in color, wingless and flat. The top surface of a bed bug looks crinkled. They range in size from ¼ inch to 3/8 inch in length. They prefer human blood but will feed on any warm blooded animal. The bed bug has a sharp beak that pierces the skin of the host. While feeding it injects a fluid that helps in obtaining blood. The bite and the fluid cause welts and redness. A female bed bug can lay up to 500 eggs which will have a life cycle of 5 weeks to 5 months each depending on temperature.

When traveling, do the following to reduce the chance of being bitten, or worse bringing bed bugs home with you in your luggage.

- Peel back the bed sheets and check the mattress, running your fingers along the seams and the mattress tag. You are looking for the actual bed bug and fecal stains (small brown to red smears that are smaller than poppy seeds). You may also see translucent light brown skins that the bed bugs have shed.
- Check the headboard and mattress rails. The edge of walls where hotel staff normally do not clean.
- Look inside the bedside table drawers.
- You should elevate your luggage and not leave it on the floor.
- Inspect your luggage carefully prior to leaving. Any infested clothing should be washed in detergent and placed in hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- If your room has bed bugs (or you think it does), request a room change. Remember to inspect your new room.

If you have bed bugs at home, call a professional pest control company and let them advise you on how to eliminate the infestation. There are chemical and non-chemical techniques available.

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