

What You Should Know About Bedbugs

A worldwide problem. Bedbugs are a growing, worldwide problem emanating from increased global travel and decreased use of pesticides. Bedbugs have been found in five-star hotels, college residences, hospitals, and virtually all other types of housing throughout the United States. Given the nearly 30,000 students and international summer visitors who live in Stanford University's residences each year, we are fortunate to have experienced very few bedbug cases since the issue resurfaced on a large scale in the United States a few years ago. Our peer Ivy League and University of California schools have also reported cases of bedbugs.

What are bedbugs? Bedbugs are small, flat, oval, wingless insects (about one-fifth of an inch) that crawl at a steady rate and are visible to the naked eye. Similar to mosquitoes, bedbugs bite humans to feed on blood; however, unlike mosquitoes, they do not transmit disease. Hardy creatures that can live for up to 18 months without feeding, bedbugs can withstand extreme temperature changes. Being nocturnal insects, their daytime hiding places include crevices, bed frames, mattresses and box springs, behind electrical outlet covers and picture frames, inside drawers of furniture, within pleats of curtains, in clothes discarded on the floor, and in other spaces where they are not easily detected. They are called bedbugs because they thrive best in beds where people sleep. A rash or bite mark with accompanying blood spots on linens are typically the first signs of a bedbug presence.



Adult



Eggs

Photos: © Harvard University – University Operations Services

How are bedbugs brought onto campus? While bedbugs are generally not carried on your person, they can be transported in personal possessions such as bedding, suitcases, backpacks, boxes, and furniture.

How does Stanford University respond to bedbug occurrences? Stanford University takes bedbug discoveries very seriously and has implemented a comprehensive pest management program to deal with cases when they are brought to our attention. We employ Crane Pest Control, a licensed, experienced pest control management company, whose employees are trained to identify and eradicate bedbugs. When a case is confirmed, we immediately relocate the affected guests. Crane then inspects all personal items in the affected rooms and, subsequently, bags them for transport. Clothes are laundered or dry cleaned. Except in very unusual cases, all personal items are returned to guests as quickly as possible. Carpeting and furniture are then removed and destroyed, and the entire room is treated. We then repaint and install new carpeting and furniture before rooms are reoccupied. Our aggressive pest management program allows us to eradicate bedbugs in a manner that prevents their reappearance in the same rooms (bedbug reappearances can be a common problem among many institutions).

Fully understanding the undue stress and burdens that bedbug issues can create for affected guests, our priority is to restore their personal possessions as quickly as possible.

What is Stanford University doing to prevent bedbug issues from arising? In addition to our response protocol to individual cases, Stanford University is engaged in ongoing proactive measures to prevent and contain future cases. These include educational materials for students and guests, staff training, partnerships with Health Services and Stanford's Environmental Health and Safety office, sharing best practices with peer institutions in the Ivy League and University of California system, and investigation of effective preventative treatments. We have also initiated new inspection procedures to identify bedbugs after students and guests move out, but before new students and guests move in.

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What can you do to help? Though bedbugs are very rare at Stanford University, with only a few isolated cases occurring in recent years, we need your assistance to avert and contain future cases. As bedbugs are brought into buildings through peoples' belongings, the following are measures you can take to help with this issue:

- *Learn to identify bedbugs.* Review the section of this fact sheet that describes bedbugs and consult other resources listed below so that you can identify bedbugs. Also, be on the lookout for signs of their presence, such as blood spots on sheets or an unexplained "rash" on your body.
- *Inspect your belongings.* Before arriving to Stanford University, inspect your suitcase and other belongings to ensure that bedbugs do not exist on items you plan to bring to campus. Launder clothes and other washable items. If in doubt, items such as suitcases may be wrapped and sealed in a large trash bag and allowed to bake in the summer sun for 2-3 days before use; the heat will kill bedbugs and their eggs to ensure that they are not transmitted during travel.
- *If you discover or suspect bedbugs, immediately contact your Service Center.* Do not attempt to eradicate them yourself. Successful treatment must be carried out by a trained professional.
- *Inspect your bed periodically.* Check for blood spots on your sheets. Lift bedding and mattress. Check in seams, between bedposts and slats, and behind headboards. Use a flashlight at night.
- *Inspect your backpack periodically.* Bedbugs can hide in backpacks. Check seams and pouches throughout your backpack for bugs or eggs. Do not place your backpack on or under your bed.
- *Clean and reduce the clutter in your room* to eliminate places for bedbugs to hide during the day.
- *Wash clothes and linens frequently in hot water, and use a dryer to kill any possible bugs.*
- *Don't bring second-hand furniture items onto campus,* as these items can be common breeding grounds for bedbugs.
- *If traveling before arriving to Stanford University,* take precautions to help prevent bringing bedbugs to campus with you. Inspect the bed you will be using as described above. Check the room, including areas behind wall hangings. Don't put your suitcase or backpack directly on your bed; whenever possible, elevate them on a luggage rack.
- *When you arrive on campus,* recheck all travel gear and packed items while you are unpacking. Don't put your suitcase or backpack on or under your bed.

Other resources. There are many good resources on bedbugs. Check the websites listed below or conduct a keyword search using your favorite Internet search portal, such as Google or Yahoo:

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2105.html>
www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/

Our commitment to you. We hope that the information appearing in this fact sheet provides you with a better understanding of this problem, the actions Stanford University is taking to address it, and what you can do to help. Providing a safe living environment for our students and residential visitors is Stanford University's highest priority. Stanford University is committed to doing everything practicable to manage the impact of this worldwide problem on our campus.