

Students and Bed Bugs: What to Do After Traveling

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You are probably reading this because you heard that someone in your traveling group or dorm room was bit by a bed bug or found a bed bug during recent travels. Stay calm! Panicking will not help. Right now, the goal is to prevent bringing bed bugs back to your residence. Early detection and proper treatment are the key, so let's get to know bed bugs.

Things to know:

- Bed bugs feed on blood, but do not live on the body.
- They cannot fly or jump, rather, they crawl and hide in our belongings.
- Bed bugs are hitchhikers and go where we go.
- Bed bugs will hide in cracks and crevices close to sleeping humans but can be found in more places than just the bed.
- Many people have no reaction to bed bug bites, so bumps are not always an indication of bed bugs.
- Bed bugs do not spread diseases.

How to Identify a Bed Bug

- Wingless, reddish-brown, oval-shaped, and flat
- Adults, they can be approximately 1/4-inch long (often compared to the apple seed).
- Bed bug nymphs can be as small as 1/16-inch, light brown and almost transparent
- Recently fed bed bugs are deep red and elongated



Capture that bug!

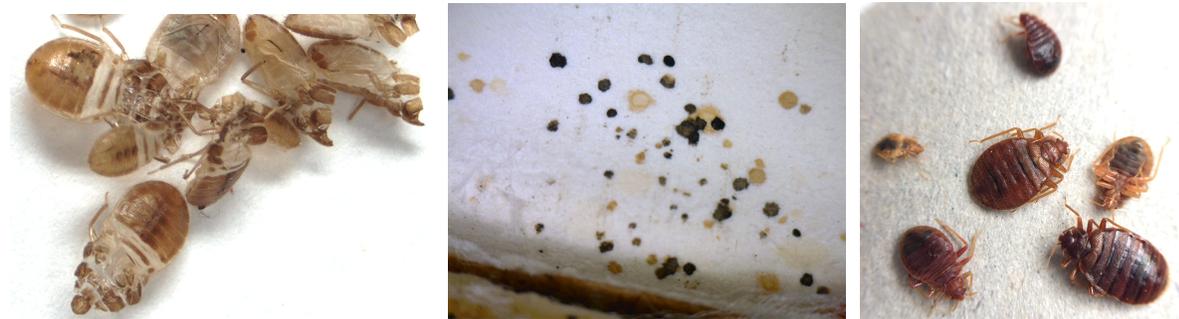
If you see what looks like a bed bug, try to catch it without squishing it and have it identified. Put it in a small, resealable, plastic baggy and turn it into university staff immediately so they can follow University bed bug protocols.

Where to look for bed bugs

Use a bright flashlight to inspect your belongings like backpacks, purses, luggage, books, etc. Look closely along fabric, folds, stitching, zippers and pockets for live bugs. When inspecting a bed, check the mattress, under the blankets, box spring and bed frame, looking closely in gaps, seams, corners, cracks and crevices. Signs of bed bugs include mysterious bites, live or dead bugs, cast skins, blood stains, fecal stains and eggs.

Steps to take when you return from a trip

- Unpack bags outside of room, apartment unit or house.
- Do not unpack items on your bed or put items-back in the drawers.
- Inspect luggage, backpack, book bag, purses for hitchhiking bed bugs.
- Take clothes (that are safe to launder) and put in a clothes dryer (120°F) on high heat for 30 minutes. Check the lint catcher for bed bugs.
- Small items can be bagged and placed in the freezer (0°F) for four days.
- Inspect hard items (i.e. toiletries) before bringing them inside and putting them away.
- Use a vacuum or sticky lint roller to inspect items, vehicle, bags and more.
- Do not store your luggage close to the bed if possible or keep luggage in an airtight trash bag.



Bed bug signs (from left to right): Bed bug exoskeletons, fecal marks, and actual specimens. (Photos: J. Green)

Other preventative measures

- Reduce clutter to eliminate hiding spots.
- Regularly change, inspect and wash bedding.
- Do not bring home used or free furniture without thorough inspection.
- Use white bed sheets or install bed bug mattress encasements. You can buy bed bug mattress encasements online, local stores that sell bedding, or some large discount stores.
- Regularly vacuum and inspect upholstered furniture.
- Store items in stackable, clear plastic totes.
- Trap or monitor for bed bugs by using bed bug interceptors (available through online vendors).
- Communicate with friends and family members about bed bugs to avoid transferring them during visits, holiday travel, and vacations.

Other resources:

- Response to Bed Bugs: Panic vs. Reasonable Actions: <https://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/bedbugactions.shtml>
- Bed Bug Infographic: https://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/bedbugs/BedBug_Info-NebExt.pdf

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