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Dr. Bug's Bugbytes
by Robert Cameron

Night, night - sleep tight...

Chances are greater that bedbugs may bite than has been the case in the recent past. It seems that bedbug infestations are on the increase. Other pest control companies that I have talked to report an increase in calls for this pest from the past. Places where they are showing up include hotels, boarding houses, university residences, dormitories, camps, homes and even planes and buses. They can be transported in bedding, furniture, mattresses, and suitcases and in multi-unit buildings can migrate from room to room.

The human bedbug, Cimex lectularius is a member of the true bug family, which includes such other notables as stink bugs, assassin bugs, chinch bugs and box elder bugs. Bedbugs have piercing mouthparts and are blood feeders. There are numerous other species of bedbugs, which feed on a variety of hosts including bats, birds and animals. Human bed bugs can also be found on domestic poultry and in bat roosts.

It is believed that the human bedbug evolved from bat bugs when our ancestors still lived in caves. Bedbugs have been found in the dump of a workman's village built during the construction of tombs for Egyptian kings 3,500 years ago. They are mentioned in Roman and Greek writings. Bedbugs were a phenomenon of the upper class in medieval Britain as they are temperature sensitive

and could not survive the cold in dwellings of the lower classes.

Bed bugs are 5-8 mm in size and very flattened. Adults are about the diameter of a pencil eraser. They are brownish in colour and become reddish brown after a blood meal. They feed mostly at night on the upper body, arms, shoulders and neck. Like many other parasites, they inject an anticoagulant when they bite, and it is this that causes the itching, inflammation and formation of a bump. Bed bugs are not known as disease carriers.

Bed bugs will hide in a variety of places including the seams of mattresses, bed frames, inside box springs, behind baseboards, door and window frames, peeling wallpaper, behind pictures, inside closets or dressers, etc. Signs of bed bugs include blood spots on sheets and mattresses. Beds must be stripped and pulled apart when inspecting for their presence.

Control involves more than saying shoo. All bed linen must be laundered. Vacuuming the mattress with a crevice tool will help. Steam cleaning the mattress is sometimes recommended but it may be difficult to dry after. Pesticide application is often necessary around the room but should not be applied to the mattress. If the problem is severe then it would be best to consult a professional.

And if they still do, hit them with your shoe...

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