

Fact Sheet

October 2008

Avoiding Bed Bug ‘Hitch Hikers’

Sometimes people can get bed bugs from visiting clients or friends or making service calls at locations that have had a bed bug infestation. No one wants to pick up and bring home (or to another location) unwanted pesty passengers.

There are two ways to get bed bugs—migration and hitch hiking. Migration is when bed bugs walk to an adjacent unit through hallways, plumbing, electrical lines, or other means. Hitch hiking is when bed bugs climb into or on bags, clothing, or other belongings and are relocated by a person.

Some bed bug biology to consider:

- Bed bugs feed at night and hide during the day (90% of their life is spent in hiding areas)
- Bed bugs prefer dark areas
- Bed bugs tend to hide near the bed or where the person normally sleeps
- Bed bugs are unlikely to be active during the day
- Bed bugs are large enough to be seen with the naked eye (an adult is 6mm long)
- Bed bugs do not fly or jump

The following practices will help prevent picking up bed bug hitch hikers:

- Learn how to identify bed bugs (see photo)
- When visiting, bring in only what you need and avoid placing bags close to walls and furniture (if this is unavoidable place belongings in a closed white plastic kitchen bag and examine it for any bed bugs before leaving)
- If possible, stand rather than sit, or avoid sitting on furniture with fabric—wood or metal chairs are better
- Inspect shoes, clothing, and belongings after leaving
- If you find any bed bugs kill them immediately
- Put work clothes in the dryer for at least 30 minutes on high heat when you get home
- Use disposable protective clothing such as shoe covers and coveralls

