



AVOID BRINGING BED BUGS HOME FROM WORK



News stories such as the ones above would prompt any office employee to wonder how they can avoid bringing bed bugs home. This article provides a few hints for workplaces that are likely to see a bed bug or two invite themselves into their building.

Bed bugs are excellent hitch hikers that are mainly transported by humans – on a person or personal items such as a purse, backpack or suitcase. They are often carried into a location on objects such as furniture and clothing. They will establish in any space where people stay still for a short period of time that will enable these bugs to enjoy a blood meal. This could include means of transportation (public or private).

There are a few facts that naturally limit the spread of bed bugs:

- They don't fly and cannot jump.
- They are generally nocturnal insects that like to hide during the day.
- They need blood, human or animal, to reproduce and develop.

While bed bugs are attracted by the heat and Carbon Dioxide that we produce and can crawl fast enough to reach us, they generally stay within or close to furniture used for sleeping or sitting.

One of the most important steps in avoiding bed bugs is to know how they look and to understanding their habits. Even bed bug eggs and immature stages are visible using a good flashlight. Welts due to bites may occur on some individuals but not everyone. These can be used as a sign of their presence.

Another important measure in preventing bedbug infestations is to implement regular inspections of the workplace. The most efficient of these inspections are conducted by a trained bedbug sniffing dog. Bedbug sniffing dogs can detect and distinguish live from dead bedbugs using their scent. Furthermore, these dogs have a sense of smell that is thousands of times sensitive than humans. Hence, they can quickly and easily find bedbugs in a workplace.

It is everybody's responsibility to prevent the spread of bed bugs. Therefore workplaces are encouraged to develop policies to limit the risk of employees bringing them to work. At the same time, procedures are needed for reducing the risk of employees bringing bedbugs home from the workplace.

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Prevention

Easy steps to prevent bringing bed bugs to the work place:

- Bring to your workplace only what you need!
- Avoid placing items near furniture and especially sleeping areas. This is particularly important for outreach workers visiting clients in their homes.
- Avoid sitting on fabric furniture in public places.
- If you suspect bed bugs are present, inspect shoes, clothing and belongings after leaving.
- Standalone non-wood coat hangers are ideal when located at a well-lit part of the room.
- However, in general, the less furniture in the workplace the better for both monitoring and treatment (if needed).
- Metal chairs or benches should be considered for public waiting areas.

How to prevent bringing bed bugs home from work:

Place personal items such as handbags in sealable plastic containers (totes) or strong durable white plastic bags. Keep these tied shut when not in use and remember to tie them shut again when you have retrieved the items so they don't get infested. Ensure that totes have a smooth outer surface that bugs will find hard to climb over and get inside. Alternatively, to discourage bedbugs from climbing inside the totes, talcum or baby powder can be applied into the groove of their outer rim (outer rim where the lid attaches). Consider putting these totes on a raised furniture item (e.g. a book case) located at a well-lit part of the room. Bed bugs generally tend to move away from light sources.

Use gloves, disposable coveralls and booties if you have to handle bed bug infested items in the workplace. Remove and seal them in a plastic bag for disposal before moving to a non-infested area.

If you suspect that you have been exposed to bedbugs, place work clothes in plastic garbage bags prior to returning home. Dump



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contents directly into a dryer for 30 minutes on high heat or wash them in hot water. Workers faced with a high risk of exposure to bed bugs (e.g. outreach workers) should consider carrying one or more water-soluble plastic bags to place their potentially infested items of clothing. The bag and its contents can be put in a washing machine. Plastic totes can be used by outreach workers for carrying potentially infested shoes.

Duffel bags used for carrying items back and forth should not have too many crevices that could provide hideouts for bedbugs. They should be kept in plastic totes during the day at the workplace.

A domestic-label insecticide can be made available to workers wishing to treat infested item. Care is needed when applying any insecticide to ensure safe use. Always read pesticide labels before use.

Providing a drier in the workplace could be considered as an alternative. If Duffel bags are provided, they need to be made of material that will not be damaged by drier temperatures of up to 55°C. Bags may need to be put in a drier if they are used to carry items suspected to be contaminated with bed bugs.

By following these simple guidelines you will increase significantly the chances of working and living in a bed bug free environment.

For more information about bed bugs and how can we help you, please visit www.abellpestcontrol.com

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