

**New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
Consumer and Environmental Health Services
Public Health, Sanitation and Safety Program**

Bed Bug Control for Homes

Bedbugs feed frequently such that the majority of insects would be closest to the host or in the mattress. They do not stay on the host after feeding. They multiply and spread to other parts of the room and eventually other rooms. They are not host specific such that any warm blood will provide nourishment. Forget about trying to starve bed bugs. The bugs may survive 2 months to a year without food depending on various conditions.

CONTROLS

Clothing can be treated by washing in the clothing washer at the high or white clothing temperature of 140°F (thermal death 130°F to 140°F depending on length of time). Remember that due to energy and burn safety, the house water may be tempered. In many cases the clothing washer does not have direct hot water supply before a mixing valve. In other cases the water heater thermostat can be raised for this purpose.

The mattress is a challenge. There are many approaches.

- Throw mattress away and replace with new.
- Encase in plastic or dust mite bag (allergy supplies) to prevent reinfestation until certain the bed bugs are eradicated.
- If you decide to keep the mattress, do not treat mattress with residual insecticides. One product that is used to renovate used mattresses is “Steri-Fab” sanitizer which has the ability to kill dust mites and bed bugs on inanimate surfaces such as mattresses, upholstered chairs, couches, and carpets.” You can spray with non-residual insecticide such as a pyrethrum or DDVP (as per label). You can also dust with Boric Acid powder.
- Make sure any wet treatment dries. Then bag as above.
- There is also a cold method of treating the mattress. Exact time and temperatures are hard to find. Examples- one University says that 5 days in a -10°F walk in refrigerator will work. Another citation says 32°F for 2 to 4 weeks.....you would still need a mattress in the meantime.

Extermination services are used to control insects in the environment. A good procedure is to spray with a residual spray (labeled for bed bugs) in concentric circles starting with the outside perimeter of the infestation. They would spray any penetration in all surrounding rooms that is on the outside of the target room. Then thoroughly spray all cracks/crevices of the target room perimeter, in the room. Then treat crevices of articles in the room [to be saved and not otherwise treated with hot or cold treatments alluded to above]. Note- Unless sprayed directly, the bed bug eggs will not be destroyed. When they hatch, they should be affected by the residual left in their vicinity. At room temperature the nymphs may take 2 weeks to hatch - at cooler temperatures 4 weeks. In conjunction with insecticide, insect growth regulators (IGR) are considered safe to get rid of tenacious problems (produce sterile bed bugs).

Additionally the exterminator could help with eliminating alternate blood hosts such as rodents, bats, and bird nests. Don't forget pets will provide blood meals for bed bugs.

CLEANING

Frequent vacuuming removes numbers of bugs. Cleaning objects removes eggs which are glued in crevices. Borax cleaner may have some effect because many insects can not tolerate Boron. Low humidity increases insect death rates. Dehydration is the natural cause of death for most insects.