USC University of Southern California

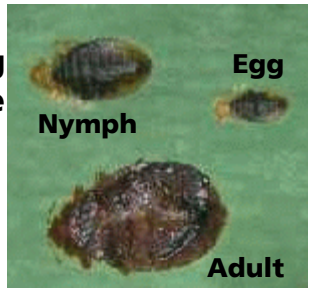
What You Should Know About Bedbugs

A worldwide problem. Bedbugs are a growing, worldwide problem brought about by increased travel and decreased use of pesticides. Bedbugs have been found in five-star hotels, college residence halls, hospitals, and virtually all other types of housing throughout the United States. Given the nearly 20,000 students and summer visitors from around the world who live in USC Housing each year, we are fortunate to have had only a few cases since bedbugs resurfaced on a large scale in the United States a few years ago. Our peer Ivy League and University of California schools have reported cases of bedbugs.

What are bedbugs? Bedbugs are small, flat, oval, wingless insects (about one-fifth of an inch in length) that are visible to the naked eye. They crawl at a steady rate. Like mosquitoes, they bite humans to feed on blood, but unlike mosquitoes, they do **not** transmit disease. They are hardy creatures that can live for up to 18 months without feeding and are able to withstand extreme temperature changes.

Bedbugs are so named because they are nocturnal and thrive best in beds where people sleep. During the day, they hide in crevices, bed frames, mattresses and box springs, behind electrical outlet covers and picture frames, inside drawers of furniture, within pleats of curtains, in clothes discarded on the floor, and in other spaces where they are not easily detected. The first sign of a bedbug is often a rash or bite mark and blood spots on linens.

Bed Bug Life Cycle





Adult Bed Bug

How are bedbugs brought onto campus? Bedbugs are generally not carried on your person, but they can be carried in personal possessions such as bedding, suitcases, backpacks, boxes, and furniture.

What does USC Housing do when bedbugs are discovered? USC Housing takes this problem very seriously and has an integrated pest management program in place to deal with cases when they are brought to our attention. USC Housing employs Eco-Lab and IsoTech, both licensed, experienced pest control management companies, whose employees are trained to identify and eradicate bedbugs. If a case is confirmed you should be prepared to vacate the premises when Eco-Lab or IsoTech arrives. The technicians must have access to all areas within the structure, including areas that are normally locked.

What is USC Housing doing to prevent bedbugs? In addition to our response protocol in the event of individual instances of bedbug infestation, USC Housing is engaged in ongoing proactive measures to prevent and contain future cases. These include educational materials for students, staff training, partnership with Eco-Lab and IsoTech, sharing best practices with peer institutions in the Ivy League and University of California system, and investigation of effective preventative treatments. USC Housing deploys IsoTech's NESDECA certified canine detection to confirm reported cases and also tri-annually as part of a pro-active preventative program.

What can I do to help? We need your assistance to avert and contain future cases. As bedbugs are brought into buildings in the belongings of people, here is what you can to do help:

Learn to identify bedbugs. Review the section of this fact sheet that describes bedbugs and consult other resources listed below so you can identify bedbugs. Also be on the lookout for signs of their presence such as blood spots on sheets or an unexplained "rash" on your body.

Inspect your bed periodically. Check for blood spots on your sheets. Lift bedding and mattress. Check in seams, between bedposts and slats, and behind headboards. Use a flashlight at night.

Inspect your backpack periodically. Bedbugs can hide in backpacks. Check seams and pouches throughout your backpack for bugs or eggs. Do not place your backpack on or under your bed.

Clean and reduce the clutter in your room to eliminate places for bedbugs to hide during the day.

Wash clothes and linens frequently in hot water and dryer to kill any possible bugs. The items should be washed in water 120 degrees or greater, as it is the extreme heat that will actually kill the bedbugs, not the water itself. The same rule applies to drying items. They should also be dried at 120 degrees or greater.

Don't bring second-hand furniture items onto campus. They can be common breeding grounds for bedbugs.

When traveling, take precautions to help prevent bringing bedbugs back to campus with you. Inspect the bed you will be using as described above. Check the room, including behind wall hangings. Don't put your suitcase or backpack directly on your bed; whenever possible, elevate them on a luggage rack.

Before returning to campus, inspect your clothes and other items before packing. Check crevices in suitcases and backpacks.

After returning to campus, re-check all traveling gear and items within when you unpack. Don't put your suitcase or backpack on or under your bed.

Other resources. There are many good resources on bedbugs. Check the websites listed below or do a keyword search in your favorite internet search portal such as Google or Yahoo.

Cornell University

http://nyc.cce.cornell.edu/UrbanEnvironment/FAQsHotTopics/Pages/BedBugs.aspx

Purdue University Entomology

http://www.entm.purdue.edu/publichealth/insects/bedbug.html

Harvard School of Public Health

http://www.pestipm.org/pests/bedbug

Further questions. If you have further questions, contact your Customer Service Center (CSC), the Housing Services Office at (213) 740-1809 or the Housing Maintenance Office at (213) 740-4646.

Our commitment to you. We hope that the information in this fact sheet provides you a better understanding of this problem, the actions Housing is taking to address it, and what you can do to help. Providing a safe living environment for our students and residential visitors is USC Housing's highest priority. Please know that everyone on our staff is committed to doing everything possible to manage the impact of this worldwide problem on our campus.