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Basic Steps for the Concerned Traveler

Many people who have suffered through a bed bug infestation describe it as a living nightmare and will do whatever it takes to make sure that they never repeat the experience again. This guide has been written for those people who want to take every precaution to avoid staying in bed bug infested quarters and more importantly, to avoid bringing bed bugs home when they return from travel. The information below describes the most important actions.

Prior to Leaving on Your Trip

1. Make sure that all of your mattresses and box springs are encased prior to leaving on your trip.

This is a pro-active step that will prevent bed bugs from getting inside of your mattresses & box springs and will aid in the early detection of the bugs in the event that you accidentally bring bed bugs into your home. It is our opinion that the best encasement available is AllerZip™ Encasements manufactured by Protect-A-Bed.

2. Pack Heavy Duty Plastic Bags in Your Car

Purchase heavy duty (>2 ml) plastic bags that are large enough to place your luggage in. When you return from your trip it will be important to seal your luggage in these bags before placing them in your car. This will isolate any bed bugs that may be associated with your luggage and prevent your vehicle from becoming infested on your way back home. Once you arrive home you will be able to deal with your luggage and its contents using the recommendations provided later in this guide.

3. Purchase No-Pest® Strips

Prior to leaving on your trip you should purchase No Pest® Strips containing DDVP (Vapona). No Pest® Strips can be used upon your return to destroy bugs that may have hitched a ride back with you in your luggage. It should be pointed out that the use of this product is controversial in some circles, but can be used safely when used in accordance with all of the manufacturer's label directions.

4. Packing for your trip

Hard shelled luggage is less bed bug friendly than fabric. Clothing that can be hot laundered or dry cleaned can be easily dealt with when you get home, however items that cannot be laundered such as electronics, toiletries, etc. can be packed in sealed Ziploc® bags to protect them from becoming infested should you encounter bed bugs.

During Your Stay at Your Destination

The likelihood of encountering bed bugs and bringing bed bugs home with you can be reduced by thoroughly inspecting your accommodations and taking measures to protect your luggage and its contents throughout your stay. Due to the inconvenience of many of the steps involved in protecting yourself from bed bugs during your travel, this section is limited to the most basic steps that will result in little to no inconvenience.

1. Conduct a Very Basic Inspection of the Bed

A well established infestation of bed bugs may be detected by pulling back the bed linens and checking the visible edges of the mattress and box spring. You are looking for evidence of live bugs, dark brownish to black spots/stains or shed skins from bed bugs.



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2. Keep Luggage Closed and Away from Bed Bug Prone Areas

Keep all zippers closed and do not place or store luggage on or next to beds, upholstered furniture or in a closet. The further you store your luggage away from these areas the better.

3. Keep items that cannot be laundered in sealed Ziploc® Bags

Items that cannot be laundered such as books, electronics, toiletries, jewelry etc should be kept sealed in Ziploc® bags whenever they are not in use. Even laptop computers can be kept in sealed Ziploc® bags when not in use, especially during the nighttime hours while you are sleeping.

4. Notify Property Management Immediately if You Suspect Bed Bugs

Notify the property management if at any time during your stay you see evidence of what you believe might be bed bugs or you begin to develop itchy welts on your body. Just because you see an insect or develop bite-like symptoms does not mean that bed bugs are present, but management should be aware of your concern so that the possibility of bed bugs can be investigated.

Returning Home From Your Destination

If you have any reason to believe that you have encountered bed bugs during your stay or that your personal belongings are infested, you should keep all items sealed in bags and call a pest management professional to evaluate the situation. Otherwise, we recommend the following:

1. Bag and seal luggage before placing in your vehicle

All luggage should be placed in the heavy duty plastic bags that you packed in your vehicle before leaving on your trip and sealed tightly. If bed bugs are associated with your luggage this step will keep them isolated until you can deal with the luggage and its contents effectively at home and will prevent any bugs from leaving the luggage and infesting the vehicle.

2. Unpack Luggage Carefully and Methodically

Do not take your luggage inside your home. If possible, unpack your luggage in an area that is well lit and away from any furniture and sleeping areas (some examples include: outdoors, in a garage, or in a cleared area in the basement).

- Unpack one suitcase at a time, separating clothing that can be laundered, clothing that must be dry cleaned and items that cannot be laundered in the following manner (but first take the bag that the luggage was removed from and discard it in an outdoor trash receptacle).
- Items that cannot be laundered that were sealed in Ziploc® bags throughout your stay can be removed from the bags and the bags immediately discarded in an outdoor trash receptacle. If you were diligent in keeping these items sealed while traveling except for times that they were in use, the likelihood of these items being infested is minimal. If you still have any concerns about these items you can refer to the actions listed below for "Items that cannot be hot laundered or dry cleaned"
- Clothing that can be hot laundered should be sealed in plastic garbage bags, or dissolvable laundry bags then sealed tightly and placed aside. When bagging the clothing it is a good idea to separate the clothing into one bag for light colors and a separate bag for dark colors. Clothing that requires dry cleaning should be placed in a plastic garbage bag, sealed and placed aside.



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- All bagged items should remain sealed in the bags until they can either be hot laundered, dry cleaned or dealt with using one of the alternative methods discussed in the section below “Addressing Items that Have Been Removed from the Suitcase”.

3. Addressing Luggage and Items that Have Been Removed from the Luggage

• Items that cannot be laundered

Items that cannot be hot laundered or dry cleaned include luggage, electronics, etc. Before addressing any of the items that have been removed from the luggage, it is important to first address the luggage itself to contain/isolate any bugs or eggs that may be associated with the luggage. There are several options that exist for luggage and other items that cannot be laundered.

OPTION 1 DDVP/Vapona No-Pest® Strips

A No Pest® Strips containing DDVP/Vapona can be placed in heavy duty plastic bags containing empty luggage and items that cannot be laundered. The bags should be sealed and left for at least two weeks in order to kill any bugs that may be present. This is the easiest but most controversial method for dealing with items that cannot be laundered or dry cleaned but can be very effective.

*Under no circumstance should this method be used for food items, medications, cosmetics or any other item that is intended for consumption or body care. Note: All label directions, precautions and restrictions should be adhered to strictly.

OPTION 2 Heat

During times of the year when outdoor temperatures reach 85° F or hotter, it may be possible to expose bagged items to lethal temperatures by sealing items in black plastic bags and placing them in a very hot environment such as an automobile. It is important to point out that this method will only be effective if the core temperature of the items placed inside the plastic bag is able to reach lethal temperatures (>115° F) for at least 20 minutes. If you are concerned about the plastic bag melting on surfaces you may not want to use this method.

• Clothing

Hot Washing of Clothing

Clothing that has been separated into dissolvable bags can be placed directly into a washing machine and laundered according to manufacturer directions. All items being laundered must be laundered in the hottest possible wash cycle (recommended water temperature of at least 140° F, and then placed in the dryer on the hottest cycle possible for at least 30 minutes.

Dry Cleaning

Bagged clothing that cannot be hot laundered but can be dry cleaned should be taken to the dry cleaners.

4. Inspect your mattress and box spring encasements

Your final defense in catching bed bugs early is your encasement you installed on your bed prior to travel. Encasement should be inspected from time to time after returning from your trip. If any evidence of bed bugs is detected or you begin to experience itchy welts you should immediately call a pest management professional to investigate the possibility of bed bugs.