

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bed Bugs are Back!

Yes, those pesky little night time pests are on the rise yet again. It is that time of year where a large number of people are migrating south to warmer weather, but they may be returning with some uninvited guests! As the number of travelers increase, clothing and luggage can become a means of transportation for bed bugs and if you're not careful, they can infest your homes.

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, brownish-red little insects that that can grow to the size of an apple seed. They feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep, but they can live several months without a meal. You usually are not aware of their little bites during the night because they inject an anesthetic agent to keep you from feeling them.

How do you know you have a bed bug infestation if you can not feel them? The easiest way to catch these pests is you will notice bite marks on exposed areas of the arms, legs and back, usually three or four in a straight line or grouped together. However, these bite marks may not develop immediately so you need to be aware of other signs as well. Some of these signs to look for include:

- Finding the actual bugs in the folds and seems of your mattress and sheets
- Small black stains (blood spots) on your sheets, pillows, or mattress seams
- Skins that have been shed from the bugs

According to Rebecca Burns, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's Environmental Health Director, "Bed bugs complaints are growing. But you can prevent an infestation by adopting some common sense approaches when on vacation. Since bed bugs usually hitch a ride on luggage or bags, be sure to inspect your hotel or motel room for signs of infestation prior to unpacking your things. This can be easily done by checking the bedding, mattresses and headboard " Other common sense approaches include:

- Vacuuming your home regularly,
- Avoid picking up used mattresses or secondary furniture,
- Place second-hand clothing in a sealed plastic bag and empty them directly into the washing machine to be washed in hot water and dried on high heat for at least 30 minutes.

If you suspect you have an infestation in your home, the best way to act is to contact a licensed pest management professional. For ways to prepare your home for the pest management professional, go to www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

While bed bugs are a nuisance and the bites may be irritating and uncomfortable, they are not known to spread disease. To learn more about bed bugs, be sure to visit the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency website at www.bhsj.org and click on frequently asked questions.

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