

Waging the War on Bed Bugs

Your home may be under siege. The enemy is often too small and fast to see with the naked eye, yet strong enough to make you feel completely helpless.

Bed bugs are very tiny, extremely annoying insects that can make themselves right at home in your bed or other furniture in your home. If you find that you wake up with itchy red marks on your body, you likely have a family of these wingless critters sharing your bed.

Medical experts and doctors agree that the bite of a bed bug will not cause any disease. Although the insects will penetrate the skin and suck the blood from their hosts, and will leave minute traces of saliva under the skin, they are not capable of spreading or transferring disease.

That's the good news.

The bad news is, of course, that there are bed bugs in your home. They're just plain icky, and the bites leave your skin feeling itchy and uncomfortable. And there's more bad news. Once the bed bugs have staked claim in your home, it takes a lot of effort to get them to leave.

Fighting Back

Before you go ahead and start doing anything drastic, it's a wise idea to spend a little time researching the problem and the possible solutions. Every task, even clearing your home of a bed bug infestation, becomes easier when you go about it with a clear head and a steady hand. Know how to tackle the problem correctly, and you'll have a better chance of success.

* Plan Your Attack

Your first step in the fight against bed bugs should always be to make a concrete and strategic plan of attack. Set aside the time and be patient. Bed bugs can make you feel crazy, so take a deep breath and plan carefully. Bed bugs are one of the most elusive enemies that you'll ever have the misfortune of meeting, and you need to be as cunning and strategic as they are.

* Take the Upper Hand

You're bigger and you're better, so don't let yourself be outsmarted by these pesky critters. Make every effort count and go in with all your strength. You're not scaring a few bugs away; you're eradicating an entire battalion. If you don't shoot to kill, all of your efforts will be futile and your time and money will have been wasted.

* Know Your Territory

Inspect the infected area carefully before putting your strategy into play. Check adjoining rooms, as bedbugs can easily be transferred and may have traveled to other areas of the home.

* Clear the Air

Getting rid of bed bugs usually involves the use of some pretty harsh pesticides and insecticides. These are dangerous chemicals, and it's important that you create proper ventilation and air circulation. Remember, if it's strong enough to kill bugs, it's capable of causing damage to your pets and family.

* Downsize

Be prepared to part with some of the furnishings and accessories in your room. Take away anything that can make a cozy hiding place for bed bugs, or anything that they can take up a new residence in. If your existing bed and other furnishings are infested, you may be forced to throw them away. Bed bugs hide in the tiniest crevices and can live for up to a year without food, so simply stashing them in the basement won't do the trick.

Getting Reinforcements

When you're battling an enemy as cunning as the bed bug, you're going to need backup. The fastest, most thorough and often the most economical way to rid your home of bed bugs is to seek professional help from people who know all about the subject: pest control experts.

On the surface, it may seem as though you're paying a premium rate for the service of professional pest controllers. The payoff, though, is that you won't be sinking money into pesticides and equipment that you'll have to use again and again. You'll also save on costs for lotions and anti-itching medications that will be needed to relieve the daily discomfort caused by bed bug bites.

If you're in need of a pest control expert, look online or in the yellow pages. There are usually experts that are secure, reliable and located close to your home. You can also ask your friends for referrals.

When you hire a pest control professional, be ready to commit your full cooperation. If you're not willing to go along with

his or her instructions, all efforts will be futile. Remember, these people are professionals, and their proven methods will ensure the accomplishment of your goal to get rid of bed bugs once and for all.

Be prepared to inform your family, roommates, boarders and nearby neighbors about your plans to hire an exterminator. This is a simple act of friendship that will be appreciated, especially if you live in an apartment, duplex or townhouse.

Once the enemy has been overcome, you'll have a new appreciation of the consequences of having bed bugs in the home. Ask your exterminator how to prevent the problem reoccurring, and observe basic hygiene and cleanliness to help prevent an infestation.