

Bed Bugs in Healthcare Facilities

Information for Pest Management Professionals

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The observance of a single bed bug in a healthcare environment is sufficient to trigger a response. Information provided in this bulletin will help Pest Management Professionals (PMPs) work with healthcare facilities to make informed decisions on how to best prevent and handle bed bug introductions and infestations.

Healthcare Facilities Should Have a Plan

A healthcare facility should pro-actively develop a bed bug plan in event a bed bug introduction or infestation be found. It is important that the document designate a responsible party, and note any other key areas of responsibility.

The plan should outline specific protocols and procedures for responding to a bed bug situation. This should include prevention measures, patient communication guidelines, laundry procedures and a detailed and orderly action

plan. However, since new information on bed bug treatments and technology is often reported, along with the potential for resistant populations developing, it is not recommended that a healthcare facility pre-approve materials or treatment methods. This decision is best left to the professional at the time of treatment.

The plan should also contain protocols for staff education. Health care staff play a significant part in identification,

prevention and in some cases monitoring. Staff involved in the bed bug procedures, as well as those who may encounter bed bugs during routine job duties, should be trained on the identification of bed bugs, as well as the specific procedures in the plan. After training is complete, personnel should have easy access to identification tools (such as pictures of eggs, nymphs and adults) and any procedures the facility has developed.

Bed Bug Prevention Measures

To reduce the likelihood of an introduction and/or development of an infestation, the following bed bug prevention measures are recommended for healthcare facilities.

- Identify and eliminate areas of clutter
- Seal cracks and crevices
- Train personnel to identify bed bugs and signs of infestations
- Avoid the use of furniture with significant harborage availability, particularly in waiting areas
- Where possible, consider the use of mattress encasements
- Use bed bug monitors, especially in high-risk areas
- Institute bed bug prevention laundry procedures as standard practice
- Consider the use of disposable equipment, such as blood pressure cuffs
- Where appropriate, conduct skin assessments as quickly as possible
- Do not allow personal bedding into the facility (for short term care facilities)
- Limit the number of personal items a patient is allowed to bring in the facility (for short term care facilities)
- Supply a bed bug information sheet on how to avoid bringing in bed bugs (for long term care facilities)
- Have regular, pro-active inspections done by a licensed PMP



Health care facilities are at risk for bed bug introductions and infestations. Those at greater risk often have high occupancy and high patient turnover. Still, introductions can occur in any facility, and bed bugs are often found in healthcare waiting rooms. Medical facilities where patients sleep have an increased risk of a bed bug introduction becoming an infestation.



Recommended Procedures

Healthcare facilities should have a plan for dealing with bed bug introductions and infestations. The following is a general guideline that can be modified to fit the facility.

If possible, specimens should be collected. However, even without a live specimen, when bed bugs are suspected:

1. The patient should change into facility provided garments as soon as possible.
2. The patient's clothing and other belongings (including purses, backpacks and the like) should be placed in tightly sealed plastic bags. The items should be laundered or immediately returned to those accompanying the patient, and promptly removed from the facility.
3. Transfer the patient, and any other patients in the same area/room, to new area/room. Do not use the gurneys in the room to transfer patients if possible. Do not remove any items from the room, including the gurney, IV stands or any other equipment being used for the patient.
4. Have environmental services perform a thorough cleaning of the room. Bedding should be bagged and properly laundered. Care should be taken not to dislodge bed bugs that may be present within bedding. All accessible areas in the room should be vacuumed. Prior to vacuuming, a fresh bag should be installed. Once completed, remove the bag and place it in a separate, tightly sealed bag and leave it in the room for the PMP technician to inspect.
5. The doorway perimeter should be wrapped with double sided tape.
6. The responsible party should contact a PMP for inspection; the PMP will determine if treatment is necessary.
7. The area/room should not be returned to service until it has been cleared by the responsible party.

When laundering items suspected of bed bugs, the following guidelines are recommended:

- The items should be laundered at a water temperature above 60°C (140°F)
- If this water temperature cannot be confirmed, the items should first be placed in a dryer on the highest setting for 30 minutes (above 40°C / 104°F) - be sure the dryer is loosely packed
- The bags used to collect the laundry should be immediately placed in new bags and then disposed of in exterior trash bins

Inspection and Treatment Recommendations for PMPs

PMPs should follow industry standards (National Pest Management Association Best Practices). When bed bugs are reported, the PMPs inspection should include a thorough examination of the following.

- Any specimens
- The entire room where the finding occurred, including curtains, baseboards, electrical outlets and equipment in the room
- The vacuum bag, if used to clean the room
- Any rooms where patients were transferred to for testing
- Any transportation equipment used to move the patient
- Any devices that made physical contact with the patient, such as EKG machines
- The waiting room, triage or any other waiting areas
- Any other identified areas of significance, including child play areas and cafeterias

If bed bugs are confirmed in an area, all adjacent areas/rooms should also be inspected.

PMPs should determine whether the particular instance is an introduction or an actual infestation.

Before treating any equipment, PMPs should consult with the facility to avoid damaging the items.

