

Eco Prevention for Bed Bugs?

If you haven't heard about the bed bug problem sweeping our nation, well, where have you been? Seriously, the problem has become epidemic with virtually no city excluded—Columbus is one of the hardest hit as well as the big cities of Chicago, New York and others. Bed bugs don't play favorites and enjoy living with humans from all walks of life, and income levels—even businesses are not immune. And, yes, they are in Delaware County.

So what can you do? The answer to that would take much more space than this column allows, but I can point you in the right direction. Think you don't need to know? Think again. Education is by far the best means of prevention.

First off, they are not harmful and thankfully don't carry disease. I found some helpful info for eco-tips in a recent Ask Umbra posting on Grist.org. She recommends the following for prevention, as do most of the bed bug articles I've read:

* **Caulk** all the nooks and crannies in walls and floors to prevent these sneaky pests, which are the size of a small apple seed, from moving from room to room. This is especially important in apartment buildings or condos and other living areas where you have neighbors on the other side of your walls or floors and ceilings.

* **Travel less**—or when you do travel, be sure and check hotel room mattresses (along the seams) for the tiny critters. Place your luggage on the luggage stand only or in the bathroom and NEVER on the bed. When you get home, isolate and check your luggage (all seams) and immediately wash and dry all your clothes from the trip. Bed bugs can't withstand temperatures of 113 degrees or higher...so dry for at least 30 minutes. Unfortunately, bed bugs like to travel.

* **De-clutter** your home, especially your sleeping area. Bed bugs don't just stay on the bed. They love to set up home anywhere—in books, statues, and other knick knacks, so keep these items to a minimum.

* **Thrift shopping** and garage sales—two of my favorite activities—have new rules. If you purchase clothes, immediately wash and dry—even check clothes before buying to find these hiding pests (they like it where it is dark like along seams and under collars). I am not so sure I would buy furniture unless you thoroughly check it first. Other items that can be dried or washed and checked thoroughly should be okay.

For more information, visit these helpful websites and read up! The best thing to learn is early detection signs, which I will write about next week and when you should seek pest control. Go to these websites for the Center for Disease Control, NYC's bed bug blog, and the EPA and do a search for bed bugs. The information is current and very helpful: www.cdc.gov; www.nyc.gov and www.epa.gov.

Bed bugs are the new pink elephant. Everyone is concerned about it and may even suffer from them, but no one is talking and that needs to change. It's yucky to think about, I know, but you need to be smart and be proactive.

Tuesday Trippier lives in Delaware and enjoys writing about green living. She has a sister who has battled bed bugs twice in NYC and has lived to tell about it. They both know more about the subject than they want to.