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What College Students Need to Know About Bed Bugs

Expert weighs in on how to keep bed bugs out of dorms

Chicago (Aug. 5, 2009) – “Sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite” is solid parental advice for small children, but as parents send their children off to college this year they should be offering a more detailed strategy to prevent bed bug bites.

After all, bed bug infestations are not isolated. They happen everywhere, including colleges. According to studies by the National Pest Management Association, incidence of bed bug infestations has grown by more than 70 percent since 2001.

Universities in the news in recent years for infestations include University of Florida, Texas A&M, UC Berkeley and Columbia University, among others. But just because a college hasn’t been in the news doesn’t mean it hasn’t had a bed bug infestation, meaning every student should be prepared.

“Every student should know how to check for bed bugs,” said Peter Trentacoste, director of university housing at Northern Kentucky University.

Trentacoste and NKU have been widely recognized for the university’s proactive approach to addressing bed bugs. His staff will offer educational sessions this fall to teach residents the signs of a bed bug infestation. The university also is making strategic purchases to make the dormitory beds less bed bug friendly.

“Universities like NKU are moving to newer mattresses that leave fewer places for bed bugs to hide,” Trentacoste said. “Students should still be covering their mattresses and examining them for tell-tale signs of a bed bug infestation – like fecal spotting. Often times it’s easier to find the bugs’ marks than the bugs themselves.”

Also, Trentacoste recommends students keep their rooms tidy to leave fewer places for bed bugs to hide. In the event of a bed bug infestation, the student rooms with the least clutter are the easiest to treat.

It’s also important to remember that bed bugs are brought to dorms, they don’t typically originate there.

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“Students need to have information on how to inspect for bed bugs when they travel,” Trentacoste said. “I have an inspection ritual before I bring anything into a hotel room. We all need to make sure we limit our exposure so we don’t bring bed bugs home, or back to the dorms, with us.”

James Bell, CEO of Protect-A-Bed, a leading producer of bed bug proof mattress encasements, offers a three-step process for inspecting a dorm room:

1. Inspect the seams surrounding the mattress for the little brown specks associated with bed bug fecal spotting, and check the mattress for tears where bed bugs could hide.
2. Pull the bed frame away from the wall and inspect all corners. Because the bed frame moves less than the mattress, bed bugs often hide there.
3. Inspect all other upholstered items in the dorm room, including chairs and couches – check seams and look under cushions.

“College students need to be well educated about bed bugs and how to spot them,” Bell said. “Mattress encasements are designed to make spotting the signs of a bed bug infestation easy, while preventing the bugs from reaching the mattress.”

Protect-A-Bed bedding encasements include the patented BugLock® with Secure Seal™, a three-sided zipper system. Protect-A-Bed products are certified by an independent entomology laboratory to be bed bug entry, escape and bite proof. To learn more about Protect-A-Bed’s bed bug management products, visit www.protectabed.com. For daily bed bug management and prevention tips, visit the Protect-A-Bed Facebook fan page at www.facebook.com/protectabed.

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