



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Battle bed bugs with caution

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- The old saying, ‘Good night, sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite’ has taken on a whole new meaning the last several years with actual infestations on the rise. These creepy crawly critters now make us think twice before occupying a hotel room, or buying a used piece of furniture, and for good reason. Once bed bugs set up camp in your home, infestation spreads rapidly and can be very difficult and costly to remove.

If you find yourself in the unfortunate position of playing host to these pests, be sure to take proper precautions when it comes to removal, especially if you plan to use pesticides. Incorrect use of pesticides for the treatment of bed bugs has led to numerous reports of mild and serious health effects, including hospitalizations and even one death.

Most pesticides used to treat bed bugs are not dangerous when applied correctly by a licensed and certified pest management professional. However, some pesticide applicators have been found to use banned pesticides or those not intended for indoor use. Even pesticides approved for indoor use can cause harm if over applied or not used as instructed, resulting in the loss of personal items, the need to replace contaminated building materials, and expensive cleanups.

Symptoms of pesticide poisoning include headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, muscle tremors, visual disturbances, numbness in the face and limbs, abdominal pain, chest tightness, heart palpitations, and chest pain.

Prevent exposure to pesticides:

1. Before using pesticides, make sure your infestation is actually from bed bugs, as some products are specific to a particular insect, and won’t work if used on another. Signs of bed bugs include bites on the skin resembling a rash, small spots of blood on bed sheets or clothing, brown fecal stains on linens or furniture, staining on ceilings or walls, and finding molts (cast off skins) in the home.
2. Don’t use pesticides indoors if they are intended for outdoor use.
3. If you want to hire someone, find an experienced and licensed pest management professional.
4. Always follow product label instructions if you intend to apply pesticides yourself.

How can bed bugs be treated safely?

In most cases, pesticides alone will not do the trick. Like lice infestations, bed bugs are best treated using a combination of practices, like:

- Thoroughly inspecting infested areas and the surrounding living space.
- Reducing clutter where bed bugs can hide.
- Installing encasements on box springs, mattresses and pillows.
- Aggressively cleaning infested areas and clothing.
- Carefully using pesticides approved for indoor use on bed bugs or a hiring pest management professional.

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2- Bed bugs and pesticides

If you believe you or a family member has been overexposed to a pesticide or feel sick after a pesticide has been used in your home, consult your doctor, local emergency room, or call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.

To learn more about pesticides and bed bugs visit www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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