



# BEYOND PESTICIDES

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## **Bed Bugs Can Be Controlled without Toxic Pesticides**

*Bed bug resurgence threatens public with unnecessary toxic pesticide exposure*

*Washington, DC, September 14, 2010* – The recent bed bug resurgence across the U.S. has homeowners and apartment dwellers taking desperate measures to eradicate these tenacious bloodsuckers, with some relying on dangerous outdoor pesticides and fly-by-night exterminators. Even pesticides registered by EPA for bed bug use are linked to acute poisoning, cancer, hormone disruption, asthma, neurotoxicity, organ damage, and more. These measures pose more dangers than any perceived short-term benefit. And while bed bugs are a serious nuisance, they are not known to transmit any diseases.

While there is no magic bullet solution to bed bug eradication, there are many ways to effectively control them without the use of dangerous chemical pesticides. To solve the bed bug problem nationwide, it is going to take a comprehensive public health campaign -public-service announcements, travel tips and perhaps even government-sponsored integrated pest management (IPM) programs for public housing and other high density areas. Bed bugs in the home can be effectively controlled through a comprehensive strategy that incorporates monitoring, sanitation, sealing, heat treatments, and more.

Below are steps that can effectively reduce and eliminate bed bug populations in homes. A complete factsheet is available at [www.beyondpesticides.org/bedbugs](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/bedbugs).

- **Caulk and seal crevices.** Prevent bed bugs from entering the home.
- **Eliminate clutter.** Getting rid of as much clutter as possible will help locate and eliminate infestations.
- **Vacuum.** This will only remove visible bed bugs, but is important to get rid of dead bed bugs and their frass. Use a stiff brush to dislodge eggs in cracks and crevices and use a vacuum attachment that does not have bristles to get into the corners. Be sure to discard the bag immediately after vacuuming.
- **Launder Fabrics and Clothing.** Wash and dry clothing for 30 minutes or a full cycle at the hottest setting the fabric will allow. Dry clean-only clothes can simply be put into the dryer. If the fabric is too delicate for the hottest temperature, place it on a lower heat setting and let it run for the full cycle.
- **Encase mattresses and box springs.** Make sure the encasement has been tested for bed bugs and will not rip and does not contain synthetic pesticides impregnated in the material. It will eventually kill all bed bugs inside.
- **Steam Treatment.** Steam treatment will kill all stages of bedbugs. Move the nozzle over the bed bugs at a rate of 20 seconds per linear foot, and wrap a piece of fabric over the upholstery nozzle to reduce water pressure to make sure bed bugs do not blow away. Many pest control companies provide this option, but customers may have to ask for it.
- **Heat Treatment.** Heat, either blown with a fan or ambient, can provide complete control of bed bugs, if all areas of infestation reach 120 degrees F.