

Don't let bedbugs ruin your vacation

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Here's how to protect yourself from blood-sucking parasites that may be sharing your hotel suite.

(HealthDay)—Bedbug infestations are on the rise, but savvy travelers know how to stop the pests from spoiling holiday trips.

Before you settle into a hotel room, check for signs of the tiny blood-sucking parasites, advised Dr. Theodore Rosen, professor of dermatology at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of dermatology at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston. Infestations have been on the rise in the United States for the past several years.

Bedbugs tend to stay within three feet of a bed but may move farther. Check the mattress, box spring and bed frame, both sides of the headboard, and the inside and back of the nightstand.

"Bedbugs tend to settle in corners, so make sure to pay attention to those

areas. Look closely anywhere there's a 90-degree angle," Rosen said in an American Academy of Dermatology news release.

Bedbugs are roughly the size of an apple seed, so they and their eggs can be difficult to spot, he warned.

Signs of bedbug infestation include specks of blood, small dark spots of bedbug excrement and their discarded outer shells. A sweet, musty odor in the room may indicate a heavy infestation of the tiny bloodsuckers.

If you see signs of bedbugs, ask for another room that is not next to, immediately above or immediately below the infested room, Rosen said.

Store your luggage as high and as far away from the bed as possible. Place suitcases on the dresser or luggage rack instead of on the floor or the bed. Hang clothes in the closet, rather than putting them in drawers where bedbugs may be hiding.

If you think you picked up bedbugs at a hotel, inspect all of your belongings when you get home, ideally before you take anything inside. If you find evidence of bedbugs, wash and dry all the clothes using the hottest settings, and vacuum or steam clean your luggage.

But even people who take all the right precautions can still be affected by bedbugs.

"People associate bedbugs with filth, but a bedbug infestation doesn't mean you're dirty. Anyone can get [bedbugs](#), no matter how clean or careful they are," Rosen said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [bedbugs](#).

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