Here Are the Facts About Bed Bugs:

- Bed Bugs are flat, brown, wingless and about 1/4 of an inch long.
- They have 6 legs and a shiny reddish-brown body, but after a good serving of your blood, they appear dark brown and swollen.
- They can be seen with the human eye, but do a great job at hiding.
- Bed bugs are not known to carry diseases as of yet.
- They feed on human blood preferring to do it in the dark when you're sleeping.
- Simply using chemical treatments will not remove the infestation.
- These bugs love to hide in the seams of your mattress and in:
  - Sofa seams,
  - Cracks in the bed frame and or head board,
  - Under chairs, couched, beds and dust covers,
  - Under rugs, edges of carpets, drawers, baseboards and window casings,
  - Behind light switches, electrical outlet plates, cracks in plaster,
  - Televisions, radio clocks and phones,
  - Backpacks, sleeping bags, clothes,
  - Behind wallpaper, picture frames and other dark areas.

**Symptoms of Bed Bug Bites:**

It can be difficult to distinguish bedbug bites from other insect bites. In general, the sites of bedbug bites usually are:

- Red, often with a darker red spot in the middle
- Itchy
- Arranged in a rough line or in a cluster
- Located on the face, neck, arms and hands

Some people have no reaction at all to bedbug bites, while others experience an allergic reaction that can include severe itching, blisters or hives.
How Are Bed Bug Bites Treated?

Typically, no treatment is required for bed bug bites. If itching is severe, steroid creams or oral antihistamines may be used for symptom relief. Secondary bacterial infections that develop over heavily scratched areas may require the use of antibiotics.

How Do I get Rid of Bed Bugs in the Home?

Getting rid of bed bugs is not an easy process, and most cases of bed bug infestation will require treatment by a pest-control expert. A variety of low-odor sprays, dusts, and aerosol insecticides can be used to eradicate bed bugs. These must be applied to all areas where the bugs are observed as well as spaces where they may crawl or hide. The pest-control company can help you determine if the mattress can be disinfected or must be discarded. Since beds cannot readily be treated with insecticides, it's often necessary to discard infested mattresses and beds.

The pest-control expert may recommend certain forms of deep-cleaning such as scrubbing infested surfaces with a stiff brush to remove eggs, dismantling bed frames and furniture, filling cracks in floors, walls, and moldings, encasing mattresses within special bags, or using a powerful vacuum on cracks and crevices.

Home Treatment if a Pest Control Company or Expert is not Possible

Use of steam or by spraying rubbing alcohol on any visible insects is done to rid bed frames of adult bedbugs and eggs, although it does not serve as a permanent treatment. Small steam cleaners have been very effective for local treatment.

A suspect mattress is sometimes protected by wrapping it in a disposable plastic sheeting, sealing all the seams and putting it on a protected bed after a final visual inspection.

Sanitization: In this method, bedding is sanitized by a 120 °F (49 °C) laundry dryer. Once sanitized, bedding is not allowed to drape to the floor. Storing sanitized sleeping clothes in the bed during the day and bathing before entering the bed are observed to be effective to quarantining a protected bed.

Encasing mattress and box springs in impermeable bed-bug-bite-proof encasements after a treatment for an infestation is an alternative treatment which works better and is more comfortable whereas wrapping bedding in plastic causes sweating.

- Extreme Temperatures

The use of a fabric steamer on the infestations may kill the eggs and the bugs instantly. The bed bugs cannot handle the intense heat and may be killed within a couple of seconds. Since steam will penetrate the pores of a mattress, it can reach deep into the corners of beds.

The thermal death point for the common bedbug (C. lectularius) is 45°C (113°F), and all stages of life are killed by 7 minutes of exposure to 46°C (115°F). However, to ensure that bedbugs do
not survive by hiding in locations that do not quite reach the thermal death point, the US Department of Defense recommends using a temperature of at least 49°C (120°F), at 20-30% relative humidity, for at least 20 minutes. Oven-like devices have been designed specifically for this purpose and are available on the market.

**Enclosing a mattress in a black plastic bag and placing it in the sun on a hot day is NOT considered an effective method of killing bedbugs, due to the difficulty of maintaining a high temperature across the entire surface area of the mattress.**

There is uncertainty as to how long bedbugs can survive cold temperatures. Below 16.1°C (61°F), adults enter semi-hibernation and can survive longer. Bedbugs can survive for at least five days at -10°C (14°F) but will die after 15 minutes of exposure to -32°C (-25.6°F). It is believed that storing infested items below -19°C (0°F) for at least four days will be successful. Carbon dioxide deployed in the form of "snow" may kill bedbugs by rapid freezing.

- **Food source isolation**

Due to the difficulty in eliminating the bugs from the room or dwelling, the (suspected) bed is isolated, thus removing the insects' food source - humans. Bedbugs cannot cross petroleum jelly and have difficulty climbing metal or glass, hence each of the bed legs is put in a tin can (the bottom of which is thickly coated with petroleum jelly) to avoid movement from the bed to the hiding places. Although bedbugs cannot fly or jump, they have been observed climbing a higher surface in order to then fall to a lower one, such as climbing a wall in order to fall onto a bed. Hence alternatively, a double-sided sticky tape (such as carpet tape) is applied around each bed leg, or to keep each leg on a plastic furniture block in a tray of water.

- **Barrier Strategy**

When it is necessary to live with bedbugs in the short term (either during treatment or while in the process of figuring out the best approach for treatment), it is possible to create a makeshift, temporary barrier around a bed that will help prevent bedbugs from crawling back onto it. A successful barrier, however, assumes the entire bed itself has been completely disinfected of all bedbugs and their eggs beforehand. Using such a strategy to isolate a bed can provide immediate relief and comfort from further bedbug bites.

An example of duct tape curled over lengthwise to create a sticky barrier.
A disinfected bed can be isolated and protected by applying a layer of duct tape around each leg of the bed -- using regular duct tape that has been curled lengthwise over on itself with the sticky side out. This creates a simple yet sticky barrier that will prevent most bedbugs from being able to crawl up the legs and onto the bed. This barrier technique may also be used in multiple strips or rows placed side by side to create an even stronger barrier (in areas where an infestation is heavy or where there exists a higher chance that bedbugs will attempt to crawl over the sticky tape). However, in using duct tape as a barrier, it is usually necessary to first place down a protective layer of some sort to prevent the duct tape from damaging the surfaces adhered to as well as to prevent the duct tape barrier from leaving behind a sticky residue once it is finally removed. This protective layer, if used, can be created by placing a layer of painter's tape (also called masking tape) around the legs of the bed first before placing the duct tape. The painter's tape will help protect the surfaces wherever the 'curled duct tape' barrier is placed as the duct tape is adhered only directly over top the protective layer of painter's tape. Also, as a substitute to masking tape, Saran wrap can be wrapped tightly around the legs of a bed and used as the initial protective layer instead (where the curled duct tape is then placed over the Saran wrap).

Typically, isolating a bed should be done only after encasing both the mattress and the box spring (if the bed has one)... Done only after successfully disinfecting the entire bed frame. Mattresses can be encased using zippered vinyl or plastic mattress encasements, or by creating a homemade/improvised encasement where the affected mattress is completely wrapped in a layer of plastic (typically plastic drop cloth) then carefully sealed tight with tape. The mattress can also be fully covered and sealed using mattress encasements that are specially designed either for bedbugs and/or dust mites (which are specialized mattress covers which, though they tend to cost more than vinyl and plastic encasements, are usually more comfortable and will also help to prevent sweating).

There is also the option to isolate a bed using double-sided duct tape (also called carpet tape) to create the sticky barrier instead, although, carpet tape may be somewhat more expensive in length per foot than regular duct tape curled over -- something to consider if the taping method is used extensively. In any case, curled duct tape (with the sticky side out) can also be used in length on floors as a perimeter barrier to help quickly isolate or quarantine furniture (where it can span multiple feet on the floor around furniture or used to surround and isolate 'legless' beds with bases that are flush to the floor [such as water beds or air mattresses], etc.). The technique can also be used to help prevent bedbugs from crawling up along walls where warranted. Long strips of this taping method (i.e. curled duct tape over painter's tape) can be used on standard floors to cordon off, surround, and isolate infested furniture, to protect clean furniture, or as part of a
treatment effort to help prevent bedbugs from crawling toward specific areas. If used this extensively, it then becomes particularly more important to apply a protective layer of painter's tape first to prevent the duct tape from damaging and/or ruining painted surfaces or from leaving behind a sticky residue when finally pulled up. It should also be noted that the width of the painter's tape can be as narrow as one inch (which is typically less expensive per foot than wider versions of masking tape) since regular duct tape, though much wider initially, will fit within the one-inch width of the painter's tape -- after the duct tape has been curled over on itself lengthwise.

Once a bed is disinfected and isolated, care should be taken to avoid reinfesting the bed by not sleeping or resting on the bed in clothing that has been potentially contaminated.

Vermin and pets may also complicate a barrier strategy. Bedbugs prefer human hosts, but will resort to other warm-blooded hosts if humans are not available, and some species can live up to eighteen months without feeding at all. A co-infestation of mice can provide an auxiliary food source to keep bedbugs established for longer or the isolating of a bedbug's food source may cause the infestation to spread. Likewise, a house cat or human guest might easily defeat a barrier by sitting on a protected bed. Preventing the bed from touching the walls, as well as preventing bedding from draping the floor, or not allowing objects to lean against the bed frame will help to stop bedbugs from being reintroduced onto the bed. Such considerations should be part of any barrier strategy.

- **Household actions**

The cleanliness of the environment has an effect on the control of bedbugs but, unlike cockroaches, it does not have a direct effect as they feed on their hosts and not on waste. Good housekeeping in association with proper preparation and mechanical removal assist in its control.

- **Catching techniques and traps**

A technique for catching bedbugs in the act is to have a light source quickly accessible from your bed and to turn it on at about an hour before dawn, which is usually the time when bedbugs are most active. A flashlight/torch is recommended instead of room lights, as the act of getting out of bed will cause any bedbugs present to scatter before you can catch them. If you awaken during the night, leave your lights off but use your flashlight/torch to inspect your mattress. Bedbugs are fairly fast in their movements, about equal to the speed of ants. They may be slowed down if they have engorged on their food source. When the bedroom light is switched on, it may temporarily startle them allowing time for you to get a dust pan and brush kept next to the bed and sweep the bugs into the pan then immediately sweep them into a cup or mug full of water where the bugs drown quickly. Dispose of the water down the sink or toilet. Disinfect the mattress, skirting boards and so on regularly.

Glue traps placed in strategic areas around the home, sometimes used in conjunction with heating pads or balloons filled with exhaled breath offering a carbon dioxide source, may be used to trap and thus detect bedbugs. This method has varied reports of success. There are also commercial traps like 'flea' traps whose effectiveness is questionable except perhaps as a means
of detection. Perhaps the easiest trapping method is to place double-sided carpet tape in long strips near or around the bed and check the strips after a day or more. However, bedbugs can simply walk across the sticky surface of tape, which, while slowing them down, will not stop them from crossing.

Some traps placed around furniture legs use a combination of petroleum jelly and slippery surfaces to catch bedbugs.