



Alameda Termite & Structural Agrees Bedbug Waste Leaves Lingering Health Risks

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Bedbugs plague homes the world over. But even after they're gone, their effects on your health may not disappear. A new study traces the problem to their lingering feces. Bedbug feces contains a chemical called histamine (HISS-tuh-meen). It is part of their pheromones. That's a mix of chemicals that the insects excrete to attract others of their kind. In people, however, histamine can trigger allergy symptoms. Among these are itchiness and asthma.

While some treatments can successfully kill off bedbugs, their waste can linger. The histamine can remain in carpets, furniture upholstery and other household items long after the vermin are gone. One study collected dust from apartments in a building with a chronic bedbug problem. A pest control company raised the temperature of all of the rooms in the building to 50° Celsius (122° Fahrenheit). This killed off the bugs. Afterward, the researchers collected more dust from the apartments. They compared all of that dust to some from neighboring homes. These had been free of bedbugs for at least three years. Histamine levels from dust in the infested apartments was 22 times as high as the amount found in bedbug-free homes. While the heat treatment had rid apartments of the bedbugs, it had done nothing to lower histamine levels.

Treating bedbug infestations should be a priority since many people are allergic to the chemicals released when these insects bite. Victims can develop redness, swelling and other signs of inflammation around the bite marks. But that may not be all. Allergies can be serious. In a few people, bites may provoke life-threatening reactions.

Scientists have shown that bed bugs can carry many different types of germs in and on their bodies. However, there is no strong evidence yet that the bugs can pass on these germs to people. Scientists are looking at this possibility. Another study found that most bed bugs that fed on mice infected with *Trypanosoma cruzi* could pick up the parasite. When the same bed bugs later fed on uninfected mice, the insects transmitted the parasite to them. *T. cruzi* causes a sometimes fatal illness called Chagas disease. Scientists now are doing follow-up research to figure out if the bugs also can spread this parasite to people.

Even if bed bugs do not spread infections, they definitely can cause mental harm to some people. One study found that bed bug infestations can make people anxious and give them insomnia. This was true even in people who never had anxiety problems in the past. The same researchers reported on a woman with mental health problems who later suffered a series of bed-bug infestations. Coping with them so overwhelmed her that she eventually took her life.

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