DON’T LET THE BED BUGS BITE

We’ve all heard the saying, “sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite.” Most of us have never given the saying any thought. For many PSU students living in apartments near campus, the saying has literally come to life. Bed bug infestations have hit several apartment complexes in the PSU neighborhood, including the Park Plaza Apartments. Students there have been dealing with the infestation since sometime earlier this year.

Bed bugs are small, elusive parasitic insects that live strictly by feeding on the blood of humans and other warm blooded animals. The name 'bed bug' is derived from the insect's preferred habitat infesting houses and especially beds. Adult bed bugs reach 5-7 mm in length, while nymphs (juveniles) are as small as 1.5 mm. Bed bugs have flat bodies and may sometimes be mistaken for ticks or small cockroaches. Bed bugs feed by sucking blood from humans or animals. Adult bed bugs are reddish brown in color, appearing more reddish after feeding on a blood meal. Nymphs are clear in color and appear bright red after feeding. The wings of bed bugs are vestigial, so they cannot fly.

Bed bugs can live in any area of the home and can reside in tiny cracks in furniture as well as on textiles and upholstered furniture. They tend to be most common in areas where people sleep and generally concentrate in beds, including mattresses, box springs, and bed frames. Other sites where bed bugs often reside include curtains, the corners inside dressers and other furniture, cracks in wallpaper (particularly near the bed), and inside the spaces of wicker furniture.

Bed bugs bite and suck blood from humans. Bed bugs are most active at night and bite any exposed areas of skin while an individual is sleeping. The face, neck, hands, and arms are common sites for bed bug bites. The bite itself is painless and is not noticed. Small, flat, or raised bumps on the skin are the most common sign; redness, swelling, and itching commonly occur. If scratched, the bite areas can become infected. A peculiarity of bed bug bites is the tendency to find several bites lined up in a row. Infectious disease specialists refer to this as the "breakfast, lunch, and dinner" sign signifying the sequential feeding that occurs from site to site. Some individuals are allergic to the bites and can actually experience an anaphylactic reaction.

When a landlord discovers a bed bug infestation, he or she must take immediate action to eradicate the problem, utilizing the services of a professional exterminator. If immediate action is not taken, bed bugs can spread rapidly throughout entire apartment complexes. If you know of a student who is living with bed bugs, they may be entitled to break their lease without penalty and receive compensation for their losses. Please have them contact Student Legal and Mediation Services for assistance at 503-755-4556.
Some tips for documenting bed bug problems:

- Photograph your bites daily - use good lighting for sharp, clear images; if possible, use a time and date stamp on your photo
- Capture and keep bedbug carcasses
- One person suggested taking the bedbug carcass along with you to a nearby hospital immediately after being bitten to get medical documentation that your bites are being caused by bedbugs
- Keep receipts of all dry cleaning, laundry, exterminator, furniture replacement expenses
- It could also be helpful to keep a journal or diary of how bedbugs are affecting your day-to-day life. These things cause mental stress, which is also worth documenting.