

Tips for Using Steam Cleaning to Combat Bed Bugs

Use a high quality industrial steam cleaning machine

- Use an industrial strength steam cleaner with two features:
 1. Continuous steam
 2. High boiler temperature—it should be rated close to 300 degrees so that the temperature of the steam coming out of the machine will be above 180 degrees
- ▶ This will reduce frustration. Inexpensive steam cleaners don't get hot enough, and you will have to spend a great deal of time refilling the machine with water.

Prepare the room where you will be working

- Remove clutter from the room
- Pull beds and other furniture away from walls so you can get to all sides of these items and to the walls
- Carefully remove bedding and then wash and dry it. Remove items from drawers and cupboards.
- Thoroughly inspect the room and all furniture.
- Remove any visible bed bugs either
 - with a vacuum cleaner
 - by catching them with the sticky side of clear packing tape
 - by squirting them with soapy water and then picking them up and putting them in a dish of soapy water
- ▶ Removing visible bed bugs is important so you do not blow them around the room when you steam clean.
- Consider sealing all cracks and crevices with caulk to prevent bed bugs from hiding in them. Remove peeling wall paper and paint.

For surfaces, use a towel over the brush head attachment

This will help trap heat in the brush head making it hotter and making it easier to get heat to penetrate fabric, carpeting, etc. Avoid using the nozzle without any covering because the pressure will propel bed bugs and eggs out into the room without killing them.

Move slowly, about 1 inch per second or slower

Give the machine time to heat up the area you are working on so you can be sure you've killed the bed bugs.

For cracks and crevices, use a narrow, brushless tip attachment without a towel

Use a narrow, brushless tip without a towel in order to force steam into the crevice. This is far more effective than trying to heat a baseboard or a part of the furniture all the way through. Again, move slowly, about 1 inch per second or slower.

Thoroughness is the key

At the minimum, you must thoroughly inspect, and if necessary, steam every inch of the bed—frame, legs, headboard, every screw hole, every staple, every crack or knot. Once your bed is clean, you can make it an island by pulling it away from the wall, using ClimbUp® bed bug interceptors under each leg, and making sure the bed clothes do not touch the wall or the floor. ClimbUp interceptors are available at Bed, Bath and Beyond.

It is practical to use steam on things like furniture, baseboards, carpeting and possibly draperies. Other items can be washed in a washing machine and dried on high heat for at least 30 minutes.

Some items that cannot be washed can be placed dry into the dryer on high for 30 minutes. You may want to put the things you clean inside of sealed plastic bags until you get the infestation under control

