

BED BUG TREATMENT AND LEGAL INFO

Easy to read info on many different Tenant Rights in Maine (not just bedbugs):

<https://www.ptla.org/self-help/2652>

Sources of information:

- Pine Tree Legal
- Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Maine Court Procedure - (Title 14, Part 7, Chapter 710)
- www.webmd.com
- <https://www.bedbugs.umn.edu/homeowners-and-tenants/understanding-treatments>

What should my mentee do if they have bedbugs in their apartment?

Step 1: Inform the landlord right away. Technically it can be orally or in writing. It is highly recommended to do it in writing, and to keep a copy of the letter for your records. Include the date on the letter. If you inform orally, keep a record of that as well somehow. Here is a sample recommended letter:

<https://www.ptla.org/sites/default/files/bed-bug-notice.pdf>

Step 2: Landlord has 5 days from receipt of letter or oral notification to come and inspect the unit.

Step 3: If inspection does indicate that there are bedbugs, landlord has 10 days from date of inspection to contact a state certified pest control expert. Expert and landlord will most likely need access to unit, and tenant must comply. They must be respectful of your privacy but at the same time do whatever inspections are needed to take care of the problem. You need to cooperate to get rid of the bedbugs. Your landlord must tell you the costs of your participation in the process. *Landlord must give you 24 hours notice before entering your unit, unless certain emergency conditions apply. Here is a list of those conditions:* <https://www.ptla.org/rights-maine-renters-landlord-coming-your-home>

Common treatments for bedbugs that tenants can/may be responsible for doing:

- Clean bedding, linens, curtains, and clothing in hot water and dry them on the highest dryer setting. Place stuffed animals, shoes, and other items that can't be washed in the dryer and run on high for 30 minutes.
- Use a stiff brush to scrub mattress seams to remove bedbugs and their eggs before vacuuming.
- Vacuum your bed and surrounding area frequently. After vacuuming, immediately place the vacuum cleaner bag in a plastic bag and place in garbage can outdoors.
- Encase mattress and box springs with a tightly woven, zippered cover to keep bedbugs from entering or escaping. Bedbugs may live up to a year without

- feeding, so keep the cover on your mattress for at least a year to make sure all bugs in the mattress are dead.
- Get rid of clutter around the bed.

Common higher level treatments that landlord tends to be responsible for:

- Repair cracks in plaster and glue down peeling wallpaper to get rid of places bedbugs can hide.
- Whole room heat treatments (needs involvement of certified pest control expert)
- Insecticide treatments (needs involvement of certified pest control expert)

Important things to consider:

Tenants may be responsible for paying for and/or doing some of the work to treat bedbug problem: Based on recommendations of certified expert, tenants will likely have some of the responsibility in treating for bedbugs, *and it is the responsibility of the tenants to pay for some of these things*. Examples of things that would be the responsibility of the tenants to do and/or pay for: launder clothing, launder linens, move furniture. *Landlord must inform you of any costs upfront*. If tenant can't afford to pay for these things, the landlord may cover the costs, and can ask that tenants repay over a six month period, or longer, by agreement (as long as landlord informs tenants up front about costs).

- If landlord does not do anything about the bedbug problem, tenant can bring landlord to court. You must show that:
 - you did not cause the problem;
 - you gave your landlord oral or written notice of the problem when you learned about it;
 - the landlord didn't take prompt steps to get rid of the bedbugs; and
 - you did not owe the landlord any back rent when you gave the notice.
- If landlord evicts tenant based on seemingly unfair circumstances (such as taking landlord to court for not taking care of bedbug problem): <https://www.ptla.org/rights-maine-renters-eviction#>
- Landlords MUST disclose to tenants who are moving in to a unit, if there has been an issue with bed bugs in the past in that unit. It is illegal for a landlord to rent an apartment that they know (or suspects) to have bedbugs. The landlord must also tell you whether other nearby apartments in the building have bedbug problems.

Before you rent ask when the apartment and nearby units:

- were last inspected for bedbugs, and
- found to be free of bedbugs.

The landlord must give you an honest answer.