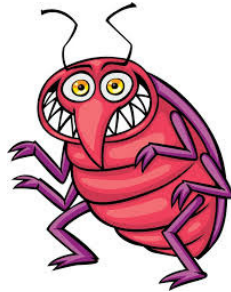


The Other Guests Coming Home for the Holidays

By Kjartan D. Armann, M.D.

I recently had a patient complaining she had shingles that would not away. When she finally came into the office I discovered she had bed bug bites which she contracted at college, probably from one of her dorm roommates. She was quiet adamant that the dorm room was well kept as were her roommates. I assured her that this wasn't about living in a dirty room or being messy roommates. In fact anyone can come into contact with a number of personal pests, such as head lice, body lice, scabies and pubic lice also known as 'crabs'.



contact. They do not hop or fly. Lice move by crawling from host to host. These lice can live off the human body for up to 36 hours in most conditions. It is not likely that we will get lice or scabies from shaking hands it requires more personal contact.

Scabies are most commonly transmitted through sexual contact. However, other forms of close contact such as hugging a child can transfer the parasites. Scabies can live anywhere on the body that has coarse hair. I have seen scabies in eyebrows and on the ankles of a very hairy person.

Bed bugs are not the same as human lice which continue to live on their human host until they are killed. Bed bugs live in our clothing, luggage, furniture, and of course our beds. They tend to bite our arms, shoulders, lower legs and ankles. Their bites tend to



be in straight rows. Over time they will scatter to other rooms of the house. They do not transmit diseases, but their bites can be intensely itchy. Dogs

are now being used to detect bed bugs in our homes. Many pest control professionals use dogs to find where the bed bugs are in your home.

Our school age children, including the college variety, are notorious for bringing head lice home to the family. As with all these parasites the entire family can be infected. Lucky for our pets they are not susceptible to our bugs; they have their own bugs to contend with. As with human lice bed bugs are human parasites and do not suck the blood of our pets.

Body lice and scabies tend to be an infestation of adult humans. Young children tend not to get them, but they may come home on your college student. They are transmitted most commonly by close personal

Treatment for head lice is with an insecticide shampoo or cream rinse that can be purchased over the counter. These products are safe to use on adults and children down to the age of 6 months. You will need to use a nit comb to get the eggs out of the hair. Repeating the process in 7 days is recommended.

For body lice and scabies a prescription for an insecticide lotion will be necessary. The lotion is applied from the neck down to the toes and is to remain on the body for 8 hours. Again the process is repeated in 7 to 10 days. Sometimes intense itching may occur after the lice are killed. This is not an allergic reaction. All used bedding; clothing and bath towels need to be washed in hot water.

You do not need to meet your returning college student in a hazmat suit, but be leary of his laundry.

