

# Battling the bedbug epidemic

March 9 2011

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"Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite" -- is becoming an impossible dream for millions of people as the world experiences a resurgence of an ancient scourge that is fostering human misery, financial burdens and the risk of exposure to potentially toxic materials. That's the message from the cover story of the current edition of Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN), ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

In the article, C&EN News Editor William G. Schulz points out that bedbugs represent a growing epidemic that is difficult to control. The bugs hide in mattresses, box springs, nightstands, and other areas, emerging at night to dine on human blood. Their bites can cause allergic skin reactions, mental anguish, and loss of [sleep](#). Infestations can be a financial burden, with professional extermination sometimes costing thousands of dollars and taking eight weeks or more. Some chemicals that were once effective against the pests, such as DDT, have been banned due to threats to human health and the environment, leaving exterminators with few effective options for controlling the pests, which have developed the ability to shrug-off some pesticides.

But the fight against bedbugs is intensifying. Scientists are looking for new substances to fight [bedbugs](#) that are safe and effective. Officials in Ohio — "bedbug ground zero" — are seeking Federal government permission to resume use of a pesticide called propoxur that can quickly halt infestations. Propoxur was pulled from the market by its manufacturer after EPA raised safety and efficacy concerns. For now, a combination of pesticides and preventive measures, such as regular inspection, laundering, vacuuming, removing clutter, and sealing up

cracks in walls and baseboards, are among the best ways to control the bugs, the article notes.

**More information:** "Battling the Bedbug Epidemic"  
[pubs.acs.org/cen/coverstory/89/8910cover.html](https://pubs.acs.org/cen/coverstory/89/8910cover.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

Citation: Battling the bedbug epidemic (2011, March 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from  
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