



Bed Bugs

**Bed Bug facts and information on how
to protect yourself and your home.**

Facts About Bed Bugs

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small insect parasites that feed on humans. Adult bed bugs have oval, flat, wingless bodies, a short broad head, and are reddish brown in colour. Similar in size and shape to an apple seed, they can be easily seen but they tend to hide in cracks and crevices of furniture, bedding, walls and floors. After bed bugs feed, their bodies swell in size and become deep red in colour.



Bed Bug Life Cycle

Female bed bugs can lay about 200 eggs in a lifetime at a rate of about 2-4 eggs per day. Bed bug eggs are usually laid in cracks and crevices and are coated with a sticky substance that adheres to woodwork, fabric and other materials. Bed bug eggs are white in colour and only about 1 mm in size which makes them very difficult to see. The eggs will hatch in anywhere from 6-10 days.

There are five nymphal stages (or instars) in the bed bug lifecycle before they become adults. After hatching, bed bug nymphs require a blood meal from a human host to continue to grow and mature into adults. The nymphs (immature form) are shaped like the adult but are yellowy-white in colour.



Adult bed bugs are about 3 mm by 5 mm in size. Adult bed bugs are very hardy insects and can live for several months and up to a year without a blood meal.

Bed bugs do not fly or jump, but crawl from one point to another. Since they do not wander too far from their host/food source, you will most likely find them around your bed and upholstered furniture hiding in cracks or crevices.



Are bed bugs harmful to humans?

Bed bugs are a nuisance and have not been found to transmit any blood-borne diseases to humans. However, bed bugs can leave bites on the skin that are initially painless and can later develop into swollen, itchy welts. Secondary infections may result from scratching the bites and should be treated by a healthcare professional. Sometimes chemicals in bed bug saliva from their bites can cause mild or severe allergic reactions in certain individuals.



Courtesy of the National Pest Management Association; PestWorld.org



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How can I tell if I have bed bug bites?

Bed bugs are nocturnal creatures and avoid light. They feed at night time and are most active at about 3 am when people are sound asleep. Therefore the bites may not be noticed immediately.

It takes a bed bug approximately 5 to 10 minutes to feed on a host. The bites are painless so the host is usually unaware that they are being bitten. Bed bug bites can look like the bites of other insects such as fleas, mosquitoes, or spiders. Bites may also look like a rash from diseases like scabies or chickenpox. However, the following characteristics may help differentiate bed bug bites from other causes:

- Bites are usually along a vein on the body and on exposed body parts such as arms, legs, neck and shoulders
- Multiple bites are present in a row/line, or in a triangle shape. Bites may also be random depending on where the bed bugs are hiding on the bed.
- Bites are itchy
- Bites do not have a red spot in the center like flea bites

Most bed bug bites do not need to be treated, however if the reaction is severe seek the advice of a healthcare professional.

It is suggested that bed bugs can detect human hosts by sensing their heat, odour, and pheromones.

Bed Bugs in the Home

Signs of a bed bug infestation in your home

- You can see the actual bugs on furniture, bedding, headboards and/or mattresses especially in the seams. If you find bugs on your furniture or bedding, place them in a jar or resealable bag for identification by a pest control specialist or your Environmental Health Officer
- There are visible bloodstains from crushed bed bug bodies on sheets, pillowcases and/or mattresses.
- Dark spots are visible on bedding from their droppings
- You notice a sweet, musty odour in your home
- You notice bites, and/or itchy welts on your skin



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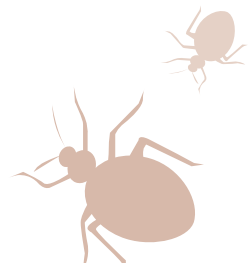


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How does a home become infested with bed bugs?

Bed bugs are hitchhikers. They do not fly or jump, they only crawl. They are brought into the home via infested furniture such as second hand mattresses or couches, or by personal articles such as luggage and clothing from traveling and staying in infested accommodations. In connected dwellings such as hotels, apartments and condominiums bed bugs travel from unit to unit through crevices in walls, floors, and along plumbing and wiring lines.

Unlike other insect pests, bed bugs are not an indicator of cleanliness or sanitation, so having a clean home does not mean you cannot get bed bugs. However, if you do have bed bugs, having a clean and tidy home will make it easier to see bed bugs and control them. Bed bugs do not favour fancier homes over modest homes-they are found anywhere where there are people.



What you can do to keep bed bugs out of your home

- Do not bring discarded mattresses, box springs, headboards or other upholstered furniture into your home
- Thoroughly inspect used furniture for bed bugs before accepting and bringing them into your home
- If you take in second hand clothing, ensure they are transported in sealed plastic bags. Clothes should be laundered in hot water immediately and dried in the drier on the hottest cycle. Heat at 50°C is effective at killing bed bugs and bed bug eggs
- Leave luggage bags in the garage or in the bathtub while unpacking after a trip - bed bugs cannot crawl on slippery surfaces
- After traveling and returning from a trip, launder clothing and bedding immediately in hot water
- You can also make infested furniture undesirable by slashing the upholstered furniture and dismantling them
- If you are discarding infested furniture post a sign on it stating "CAUTION: INFESTED WITH BED BUGS"
- Minimize the clutter in your home; remove books, boxes and clothing from floors to minimize bed bug hiding places. Store these items in sealed containers as bed bugs do not chew through plastic or furniture
- Freezing personal articles can also be effective at killing bed bugs but possibly not the bed bug eggs. The freezing method can take several days at very cold temperature below (-18°C) so this may not be feasible. Since there is much debate on the effectiveness of freezing, heat treatment is recommended

If you suspect that you have a bed bug problem in your home, the best approach is to capture a bug for identification. Contact your Environmental Health Officer to assess the extent of the bed bug problem and then recommend a treatment plan.

If you discard a bed bug infested mattress post a sign on it stating "Caution infested with Bed Bugs." This will discourage people from taking infested furniture.



What you can do to keep bed bugs from spreading within the Community



Bed bug clean up and control

Bed bugs are difficult to get rid of and infestations are hard to treat. Repeat applications are usually required to address a bed bug infestation. The best and safest approach for getting rid of a bed bug infestation is to hire a licensed pest control operator. PCO's are trained professionals that have the experience in bed bug control methods as well as the tools and equipment necessary to treat affected areas.

A licensed pest control operator will be able to:

- Confirm the presence of bed bugs in your home
- Identify where bed bugs are hiding in your home
- Treat the home and belongings with steam, heat or chemical pesticides if necessary
- Conduct subsequent inspections to ensure bed bugs are gone and whether treatment was effective
- If you do hire a licensed pest control operator ensure that you follow their recommendations regarding room preparation, after treatment precautions, and what to look for after treatment

What you as the occupant can do to help control/ manage a bed bug problem

- Use a bright flashlight to force bed bugs out of their hiding spots such as in bedroom furniture or bed frames, behind baseboards, behind pictures or wall hangings, in the seams of mattresses, or clothing on the floor.
- Tidy up all clutter around the home and start by:
- Cleaning your bedding, linens, curtains and rugs. To kill bed bugs, linens and clothing should be washed in hot water and dried in the dryer for 30 minutes on the hottest setting.
- After laundering, clothing should be stored in dresser or wardrobes and not on the floor
- Having less clutter around the home will make it easier for wandering bed bugs to be seen and more likely be vacuumed up
- Seal cracks and crevices to reduce bed bug hiding spots
- Place monitoring devices around your home such as sticky glue paper, these can be placed around bed post legs and walls or anywhere you suspect bed bugs
- Climb up interceptors can be purchased from a local hardware store and placed around your bed posts. These are good for preventing bed bugs from climbing onto your bed as well as trapping bed bugs.
- Alternatively you can place petroleum jelly around bed posts to prevent bed bugs from climbing onto your bed
- Use a bagged vacuum with a nozzle attachment. Vacuum the seams of your mattress, and bed frames. Vacuum nearby furniture and along baseboards and floors.
- Place used vacuum bag into a plastic bag, seal and discard right away
- Encase mattresses and boxsprings in zippered mattress cases such as those for allergy dust mite prevention.
- If bed bugs were found on your mattress or boxspring, you don't necessarily have to throw it out. Professional pest control operators can safely steam, heat treat and apply chemicals to destroy the bed bugs.

Other tips to minimize the spread of bedbugs in the community

It is easy to transport bedbugs or eggs into unaffected homes or facilities through clothes and belongings if you live in or visit a home or facility infested with bed bugs. If you will visit a home that is known to have bed bugs, practice the following:

- Wear light colored clothing so it is easier to spot hitchhikers
- Wear plastic booties or you can tie plastic bags around your feet
- Keep personal belongings in a sealed plastic bag and seal
- Sit on hard chairs or stools instead of upholstered furniture or beds
- Avoid placing belongings on upholstered furniture, or bedding or on carpet
- Keep a change of shoes and clothes in your vehicle, once you are finished your visit, change into the new clothes and place the worn clothes in a plastic bag and seal. Launder the worn clothing immediately in hot water cycle after returning home.
- Inspect your belongings from the trip for bed bugs

Should I buy or use chemical pesticides myself?

Remember bed bugs are difficult to get rid of and infestations are hard to treat. Although you may see products on the market claiming pest destruction, these are often not effective against bed bugs. Bed bugs can also develop or be resistant to commonly available household pesticides. Chemical pesticides which can be hazardous to people and pets, are usually required to get rid of a bed bug infestation and repeat applications are typically required. Therefore, pesticides should only be applied by a certified professional pest control operator.





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For more information please contact your Environmental Health Officer.