

# BED BUGS

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Bed bugs are small blood sucking insects with oval-shaped bodies. Bed bugs do not have wings. Adults are 1/4 inch long and flat as paper. After feeding they turn dark red and become bloated.

A female bed bug can lay 200 to 400 eggs during her lifetime. Eggs are white, pear shaped and about the size of a pinhead. Clusters of 10 to 50 eggs can be found in cracks and crevices. Eggs hatch in about 10 days.

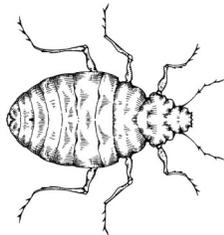
Bed bugs can be found in many places: homeless shelters, transient housing, work camps, apartments, single family dwellings, and 5-star hotels. An infestation of bed bugs does not mean you are not properly cleaning.

### Bed Bugs Feed On

Bed bugs prefer to feed on human blood, but will bite mammals, including your pets, and birds. Bed bugs bite at night and will bite all over your body, especially around the face, neck, upper back and chest, arms, and hands. Bed bugs are attracted to the carbon dioxide you breath out.

Both male and female bed bugs bite.

Bed bugs live from a few months to more than a year without feeding!



### Can I Get Sick From Bed Bugs?

There are no known cases of infectious disease transmitted by bed bug bites. However, scratching the bites can lead to infections.

### Bed Bug Bites

When bed bugs bite people, they inject their saliva into the bitten area. Bites can take up to 2 weeks to appear. Most people are not aware that they have been bitten but some people are more sensitive to the bite and they may have a localized reaction. The skin might become irritated and inflamed at the bite site. Individual responses to bed bug bites will vary. The bed bug bites can be mistaken for flea or mosquito bites or other skin conditions.

### Four Types of Skin Rashes

1. The most common rash is made up of localized red and itchy flat lesions. The classical bed bug bites show a 3 bites in a row, called "breakfast, lunch, and dinner".
2. Small raised red swelling lesions.
3. In rare cases, people may develop large raised, often itchy, red welts.
4. In people with high sensitivity to bed bug saliva, people may develop a lump filled with blood or fluid.

Bed bug bites most commonly occur on exposed areas of the body, including face, neck, hands, arms, lower legs, or all over the body.

## Bed Bug Bite Treatment

Most bed bug bites go away by themselves and do not need treatment. Keep the skin clean and try not to scratch. If the bites are very itchy, your health care provider may prescribe cream or antihistamines to relieve the itchiness. Oral antibiotics may be prescribed for any secondary skin infection from excessive scratching. Always see your health care provider if you have treatment questions.

## How Bed Bugs Get Into Your Home

Bed bugs are often carried into a home on objects such as furniture and clothing. If you think you have a bed bug problem, check for live bed bugs, body shells, and eggs in these areas:

- seams, creases, tufts, and folds of mattresses and box springs, and inside box springs
- cracks in the bed frame and head board
- under chairs, couches, beds, and dust covers,
- between the cushions of couches and chairs
- under area rugs and the edges of carpets
- between the folds of curtains
- in drawers
- behind baseboards and around window and door casings
- behind electrical plates
- under loose wallpaper, paintings, and posters
- in plaster cracks
- in telephones, radios, and clocks.

Bed bugs prefer places where they can easily hide and feed, such as bedrooms and sleeping areas. Bed bugs can travel from apartment to apartment along pipes, electrical wiring, and other openings.

If the infestation is heavy, a sweet smell may be noticed in the room.

## Prevent Bed Bugs From Entering Your Home

Even the cleanest homes and hotels can have bed bugs. Regular house cleaning can help to prevent an infestation.

- Vacuum frequently, including baseboards, around and under all furniture, and mattress.
- Remove clutter. This helps reduce the number of places bed bugs can hide.
- Be careful when buying used furniture or clothes. Make sure to inspect the used item. Ask the retailer if the items were checked for bed bugs.
- Do not bring used mattresses and box springs into your home. These items may be infested with bed bugs.
- Encase your mattress and box spring in “bed bug proof” covers. Seal the zippers with duct tape.
- Take these precautions when travelling:
  - \* Protect your luggage. Put your luggage in the bathroom tub while you check the room. Bed bugs have trouble climbing up smooth, polished or metal surfaces.
  - \* Protect your luggage. Keep all belongings in your luggage and wrap your luggage in plastic to help prevent bed bugs from entering your luggage. Keep luggage on the shelf or above the floor.
  - \* Protect the bed. Move the bed away from the wall, tuck in all bed sheets, and keep blankets from touching the floor.
  - \* Inspect the room and furniture. Inspect all cracks and crevices of the mattress and box spring. Look for blood spots or live insects. Ask for a different room if you find signs of bed bugs.
  - \* Protect your home. Keep your luggage in an isolated area of your home, such as the garage. Inspect the luggage. Wash all your clothes in the hottest water possible and put them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes. This includes clothes you did not wear.

## What Do To Do If You Find Bed Bugs in Your Home

Consult with your local health department or a professional pest control operator to confirm that you have bed bugs.

Bed bugs are hard to get rid of. The best method to deal with bed bugs is by an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedure, which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to human health and the environment.

Check daily. Set out glue boards or sticky tape (carpet tape works well) to catch the bed bugs. You can wrap bed legs with double sided tape. You need to check everything in the infested room or rooms, including inside clocks, around picture frames, electrical outlets, and switch plates.

Check bedding, mattress and both sides of the box spring, and seams, folds in fabric and bed frame for blood spots, live bed bugs, dead bed bugs, eggs, and fecal matter. Use a good flashlight. Remove all linens. Pull the bed 4 inches (10.16 cm) away from the walls.

You must vacuum daily. Use a nozzle attachment on the vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Vacuum all crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards and any objects close to the bed. When done, empty the vacuum immediately. Check the vacuum for bed bugs. Wash the nozzles, canister and brushes in hot soapy water.

Wash all your linens in the hottest water possible and then dry them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes. Consider covering your pillows and mattress with a cover designed to keep bed bugs out.

If you put items outside in the winter, you need at least 4 days at -19°C (-2°F) or colder to kill bed bugs. Even at these low temperatures you may not kill all the bed bugs.

Remove all unnecessary clutter.

Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on floors, walls and wood bed frames. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper, tighten loose light switch covers and seal any openings where pipes, wires, or other utilities come into your home.

Check shared apartment walls.

You may continue to see bed bugs after any treatment. This is normal. Bed bug infestations are hard to treat and IPM professional may need to return and retreat the area several times.

## What To Do if You Live in a Building With Bed Bugs

**Educate yourself** - Learn how to identify, treat and prevent bed bugs.

**Monitor** - Check for bites on your body and blood stains on linens and clothing

**Get rid of clutter** - Bed bugs thrive in a cluttered environment.

**Pest proof your home** - Eliminate bed bug hiding places by sealing all holes and gaps in baseboards, pipes and cover plates. Use caulking to seal base boards and trim. Use expandable foam for areas around drains and water pipes. Use kick plates and weather stripping for doors.

**Do not hesitate, take action** - If you find any evidence of bed bugs, immediately contact your landlord or property management and ask for pest control treatment.

**Preparation is key** - Thorough and proper preparation prior to pest control treatment is key to successful bed bug control.

**Make your bed an island** - Encase your mattress, box spring, and pillows in covers or mattress encasements. Remove bed skirts and make sure sheets do not touch the floor.

Apply carpet tape to corner posts or place corner posts on glue boards that have been taped to the floor. Place each bed leg in an empty can filled with petroleum jelly. Pull the bed 4 inches (10.16 cm) away from the wall.

## Myths and Facts About Bed Bugs

**Myth:** Bed bugs are too small to see.

**Fact:** Bed bugs are big enough to be seen with the naked eye. Bed bugs look similar to an apple seed in size and appearance. They may be hard to find because they hide well,

**Myth:** Bed bugs are only found in homeless shelters. Only poor people or dirty people get them.

**Fact:** Bed bugs can be found in hotels, motels, dormitories, apartments, condos, private homes, and in some public places, such as businesses and offices. Bed bugs are not related to living conditions. Anyone can get bed bugs.

**Myth:** Walking into a room that has bed bugs means you will get bed bugs.

**Fact:** Bed bugs do not jump. They spend 90% of their time hiding and are usually active only at night. Bed bugs avoid light and do not like to be disturbed.

**Myth:** Bed bugs cause disease.

**Fact:** Bed bugs do not transmit disease and are not considered a health hazard. Bed bug bites, however, can cause allergic reaction in some people similar to a mosquito bite. Frequent scratching of the bite marks or picking the scabs can cause infections.

**Myth:** Pesticides will kill bed bugs.

**Fact:** Pesticide application alone will not kill bed bugs at all stages. Successful bed bug control depends on an IPM approach which includes vacuuming, laundering belongings and sealing gaps where bed bugs can hide. Do not use over-the-counter pest control products or home remedies such as kerosene.



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### For information call a Public Health Inspector at:

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