

# BED BUGS

## What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are very small (about ¼-inch long) reddish-brown, wingless insects that feed on warm-blooded animals, which are typically humans, although other mammals and birds can be used in the absence of a human host. During the day, they usually hide, but they come out at night to feed on the host's blood while the host is sleeping. Bed bugs can live a long time without food (blood.)

## What are signs that you have bed bugs?

Bed bugs cause a person to have welts and areas of irritation where a bed bug bite occurred. These bites can be on any bare skin. Some signs that you may have bed bugs, or an infestation, are smears of blood on your pillow, sheets, and blankets, or bed bugs present in the fold of mattresses and sheets. There may also be a strange, sweet-musty odor that develops in your bedding.

## How are bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs do not fly. They crawl to bite a host and obtain blood. During the day, they usually hide in cracks or very small openings close to their host. Then at night, they have a very short crawl for their blood meals. This is why they are frequently found in beds – mattresses have many tiny spaces and are very close to a human host.

Bed bugs can also “hitchhike” and hide in luggage, clothing, furniture, etc. This is why infestations with bed bugs can be a problem at homeless shelters or motels/hotels where there is a high turnover of occupants. Animals, such as pets or mice in an attic, may also bring bed bugs into the home.

## Who gets bed bugs?

Anyone can get bed bugs. Bed bugs can affect people of any age, gender, race or level of cleanliness. Even if a person has had a bed bug infestation before, a person can be infested again if they are exposed to the bugs.

## What treatment is available for people with bed bugs?

No specific treatment is available. Bed bugs do not generally cause illness. Persons may sometimes use products to lessen the itching and redness from the bugs' bites.

## Do people with bed bugs need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

Persons with bed bugs do *not* need to be kept home.

## How can I rid my home of bed bugs?

Getting rid of bed bugs is very hard, and many people call pest control companies to help them. Here are some things you can try on your own:

- Clean infested bedding and clothing by using hot water, hot dryers, or by dry cleaning. Items that cannot be cleaned should be bagged in plastic and placed in the sun for several days.
- Reduce clutter in order to lessen the number of places the bugs can hide.
- Vacuum sites with signs of infestation using a suction hose-attachment on your vacuum cleaner.

## How can I protect myself and my family from getting bed bugs?

- Avoid picking up furniture from the curbside that was left for garbage.
- Carefully inspect second hand furniture for signs of bed bugs (e.g., brown smears.)
- When traveling, carefully inspect your bed (bed sheets and seams of the mattress) for signs of bed bugs and request a new room if you see signs.
- When traveling, place your luggage on a luggage stand.