
Bed Bugs

What You Need to Know



What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small brownish insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Adult bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed, and have a flat, oval-shaped body with no wings. After a blood meal they become swollen and reddish brown in color.

What does a bed bug bite look and feel like?

Bed bug bites usually look like little red bumps similar to a mosquito bite. Unlike flea bites, they do not have a red spot in the center. The bites are usually grouped together in a straight line or cluster. Exposed areas of the arms, legs and back are more prone to bed bug bites.

Can I get sick from bed bug bites?

Bed bugs are not known to transmit any human disease. Some people have no reaction but other people may have irritating, itchy allergic reactions.

What is the treatment for bed bug bites?

If you have an allergic reaction to bed bug bites, check with your doctor who may suggest using an antihistamine or topical cream to prevent itching. If not treated, itching can lead to infection of the bites.

How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?

If you have bites you can't explain, bed bugs may be the cause. They live as close to their food source as possible. Bed bugs often live directly on or inside the mattress, in the tufts and folds, and along the seams. They may also be found in the box-spring, on the bed frame, headboard and furniture near the bed. They will leave "blood spots" and cast skins on sheets, pillows, or mattresses. They also hide in: cracks and crevices of furniture or wood floors; under chair or couch cushions; under area rugs; between curtain folds; in or under drawers; behind baseboards and window casings; behind electrical plates and loose wallpaper; in cracks in plaster; or in telephones, radios, and clocks.

How do bed bugs get into my home?

Bed bugs often enter the home on objects such as furniture and clothing, or in luggage from a recent trip. Once in the home they are mostly found in areas where people sleep but can travel to other rooms or apartments along pipes, electrical wiring and other openings.

How can I prevent bed bugs from getting into my home?

- Do not bring used mattresses, box springs, bed frames or upholstered furniture into your home because it is hard to see if bed bugs or their eggs are present.
- Other used furniture should be carefully inspected and scrubbed with soapy water or household cleaner to remove any possible bed bugs or their eggs.
- Place second-hand clothing in a sealed, plastic bag and empty directly into the washing machine. Wash in hot water and dry on a hot setting to kill bed bugs and their eggs.
- Vacuum floors and mattresses regularly.

How can I avoid bringing bed bugs home when I travel?

- When staying away from home, inspect the room for signs of bed bugs prior to unpacking your luggage. Place luggage in bathtub upon entering the room. Do not sit luggage on the bed or luggage rack until inspection is complete.

- Check common trouble spots; behind the headboard, along mattress seams, under seat cushions, inside and underneath drawers, around light switches and nightstand.
- If you find a bug, shed skin, blood spot or fecal matter contact the front desk. Insist on a new room at least two floors away from the infested room. Repeat inspection in new room.
- Hang clothes in the closet farthest from the bed. Store empty luggage in a large plastic bag.
- Keep all clothing and personal items off the floor, furniture or extra bed during your stay.
- Check clothing and luggage for signs of bed bugs before packing. Place all items in a large plastic bag and seal before placing in luggage.
- Carefully inspect luggage before bringing into the house. Place all items from the plastic bag into the washer. Wash and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes. Brush and vacuum luggage inside and out prior to bringing in the house.

What can I do if I have bed bugs in my home?

The best way to deal with bed bugs is by using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach that uses a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to humans and the environment.

- The first step is to confirm a bed bug problem. Use a bright flashlight to inspect mattresses, sheets, and pillows for signs of bed bugs or the blood spots they leave behind after feeding.
- Consider hiring a pest management professional to eliminate a bed bug infestation. They should do a thorough inspection of your home, verify the type of insect, and provide instructions for preparation and cleaning required prior to and after treatment.
 - If they are planning to use a pesticide, make sure they are licensed and certified. Ask to see a copy of their certification to verify. A list of companies licensed to apply pesticides in Michigan is available at: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/.
 - Ask for the brand name of the pesticide and the name of the product's active ingredient in case someone in your home gets sick from exposure to the product. Check the label to verify it is approved for indoor use. Never use a product labeled for outdoor use inside.
 - DO NOT apply any pesticide to a surface that may be in contact with humans.
 - Always follow pesticide product label instructions. Do not over apply or apply more often than product label advises. Do not use household chemicals such as bleach, alcohol or kerosene for pest control. They can cause negative health effects, fire or explosions.
- If there are signs that bed bugs are present use a nozzle attachment on a vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Scraping may be necessary because eggs often stick to the surface. Vacuum all crevices on the mattress, box spring, bed frame and the area around the bed. Immediately dispose of the vacuum bag or contents by placing in a sealed plastic bag or container and removing from the house.
- After careful vacuuming, seal an infected mattress, box spring or pillow in a high-quality encasement that is designed and tested to keep bed bugs in for one year to kill any remaining adult bed bugs or eggs.
- Remove clutter because it provides hiding places for bed bugs.
- Wash all linens in hot soapy water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.

For more information on bed bugs contact:

Oakland County Health Division

Environmental Health Services www.oakgov.com/health/program_service/eh_index.html

State of Michigan

Michigan Department of Community Health-Emerging Diseases website

www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186--147759,00.html



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