

Bed Bugs Fact Sheet

Information for Healthcare Workers

What are Bed Bugs:

Bedbugs are small, wingless insects that feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. They are easily moved from room to room on infested objects. Bedbugs cannot easily climb metal or polished surfaces and cannot fly or jump. Adult bedbugs can be as long as 10 mm. They have an oval, broad, flat body and a short, broad head. Adult bedbugs are brown but darken to a blood red color after feeding. The female bedbug lays at least 200 eggs in her lifetime, at a rate of about two to four each day. They usually hatch in 6 to 17 days. Young bedbugs are shaped like adults but are smaller (1.5 mm long) and lighter in color. They also darken after feeding.



Signs and Symptoms:

Having bite marks on your body is the most common sign of bed bugs. Most people do not realize they have been bitten until bite marks appear anywhere from one to several days after the initial bite. The bite marks are similar to that of a mosquito or a flea — a slightly swollen and red area that may itch and be irritating. Most people are bitten while they sleep and do not know that they have been bitten until the next day when they notice one or more of the following:

- Several welts, often appearing in a line that zigzags
- Welts that itch intensely
- Specks of blood on the bedding



Cause:

They can come from other infested areas or from used furniture. They can hitch a ride in luggage, purses, backpacks, or other items placed on soft or upholstered surfaces. They can travel between rooms in multi-unit buildings, such as apartment complexes and hotels.

Transmission:

Bed bugs, unlike lice, don't travel directly on people and spread from person to person. But they can travel on people's clothes. In this way, people can spread bed bugs to others, without even knowing it.

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Contagious Time Period:

Bed bugs are not contagious in that they cannot be transmitted from person-to-person. However, bed bugs can hide and live in a person's bedding, clothing, luggage, and furniture. When these items enter a home or are transported to another area, they can transport the bed bugs with them.

Work Restrictions:

You can go to work if you have been bitten by bed bugs, although you should try to avoid bringing any to work. This can be done through quarantine. Keep your work and home clothes separate (store them in a plastic zip-lock bag) to avoid taking any into the workplace.

Prevention:

The best way to stop the spread of bed bugs is to regularly inspect for signs of an infestation. That way, you can take care of any bed bugs early, before they start to spread. Other ways to help stop the spread of bed bugs include:

- Keep your bedroom clean and clear of clutter where bed bugs can hide, especially clothing.
- Avoid secondhand furniture. If you do, check it thoroughly for signs of bed bugs before bringing it into your home.
- Use a protective cover over your mattress and box spring.
- Vacuum your home regularly.
- Inspect your sleeping area when you travel. Use a bag stand in hotels rather than putting your bag on the floor or bed. When traveling, inspect your luggage and clothes before leaving to go home.
- If you use shared laundry facilities, take your clothes there in a plastic bag. Remove clothes from the dryer immediately and fold them at home.

How can bed bugs be removed:

Bed bug infestations are commonly treated by chemical spraying. Always follow safe work procedures when working with or near pesticides.

- Other physical methods of controlling bedbugs include steam cleaning, vacuuming, heating, freezing, washing, or throwing out items.
- Items that cannot be washed in hot water and detergent (e.g., mattresses, upholstery, etc.) should be steam cleaned. Dry steam or low vapor steamers are better because they leave less moisture.
- Small non-washable items and dry-clean-only items can be placed in a hot dryer for 30 minutes or more.
- Wash mattress pads, bedding, bed skirts, infested clothes, curtains, etc. in hot water and dry them on the hottest dryer setting.
- Store clean, dry items in a light-colored sealed heavy-duty plastic bag or storage bin with secure lids to avoid infesting other areas. Light-colored bags or bins make it easier to see any bedbugs.
- Throw out any items that cannot be washed, heated or steam cleaned.
- Vacuums with cloth bags or hoses made of fabric are not recommended as the vacuums can become infected.
- If using a bagless vacuum, empty the canister content into a plastic garbage bag and dispose of the bag.