



Bed Bugs



What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are a biting insect. Bed Bugs are about 1/4 inch long, oval, reddish-brown and wing-less. Their body is very flat. Bed bugs hatch from whitish, pear-shaped eggs about the size of a pin-head. They lay up to 500 eggs per year. Bed bugs feed on blood, primarily human, but will also bite mammals and birds.

Reason for Concern

Bed bugs need to feed on blood to mature. You may not be aware you have been bitten. Some people have swelling or itchy welts. In some cases scratching has led to infection. Bed bugs can easily be carried to other areas of the home or to someone else's home. They multiply very quickly and are mostly a nuisance. They are hard to completely get rid of and it takes a long time.

Risk Groups

- Anyone in close contact with other people.
- People who travel and stay in hotels frequently.
- People who share clothing or beds.

How Do I Know If I Have A Bed Bug Problem?

Bed bugs are mainly active at night. During the day they hide. Because of their small, flat bodies they hide in many places. Check for bed bugs in areas such as:

- mattress pads and box springs
- cracks in bed frame and head board
- electrical outlets
- night tables and dresser drawers
- under rugs and baseboards
- telephones, radios, clocks

The bed linen, mattresses, bed frames or walls may show signs of dark reddish-brown blood stains.

How Do I Control Bed Bugs?

- Remove or reduce clutter in the infested room. Regular house-keeping is important.
- Bedding and clothing should be washed in hot water and dried on the hottest setting for at least 20 minutes.
- Vacuuming carpets, mattresses and box springs, especially around seams and edges of mattresses will help. Throw the vacuum bag outside in garbage immediately after. Steam cleaning carpets and mattresses is also helpful.
- Mattresses can be wrapped in zippered bed bags or covered in plastic film with the seams sealed.
- Coat the legs of the bed with 2-sided carpet tape, or Vase-line/petroleum jelly, or place the legs inside glass jars or metal cans to prevent bed bugs from climbing up to the mattress.
- Check picture frames, switch plates, clocks, phones, televisions and smoke detectors, etc., for bed bugs. Clean if possible, or discard.
- Small items that can't be washed can sometimes be treated by heating (to >50°C) or freezing (2 days at 0°C).
- Check second-hand furniture or clothing for bed bugs before bringing into your home.
- If the bed bug infestation is severe a professional may be required for control.

How do we treat for Bed Bugs?

There are two types of treatment. Both must be done by licenced Pest Control Officers. In both methods, the home or building must be decluttered for access to all of the bed bug hiding spots for proper treatment. The two types are:

- Chemical Spray Insecticide – Kills adults -needs 2 applications and cost is about \$1200
- Heat Treatment –kills eggs - Raises room temperature to 50C - 60C – cost is about \$1200 per day – requires lots of preparation.

How Do I Treat Bites?

Most bites don't need treatment, other than washing with soap and water to keep the skin clean. Creams or lotions are available at a drugstore to help with the itching. If bites become infected consult your physician or primary care nurse.

Where Can I Get More Information?

See your Community Health Nurse or local Environmental Health Officer for more information.