

BED BUGS

The presence of bed bugs in hotels, motels, dormitories, apartments, and houses in the United States has increased in the past few years; **however, bed bugs infest only a very small percentage of residences.**

The bite of a bed bug has not been shown to spread disease. Bed bugs may be difficult to control without help from a pest control professional.

CAUSE *Cimex lectularius*, a parasitic insect.

Bed bugs are small (up to 1/4" long) flattened, wingless insects that feed on the blood of people and certain animals. After feeding, the color of a bed bug changes from brown to purplish-red. Bed bugs live close to areas where people sleep, rest, or sit for long periods. Bed bugs move quickly, feed at night, and hide in small spaces (under bed mattresses, in furniture, etc.) during the day.

SYMPTOMS Painless bites typically on the head, neck, arms, hands, or legs. Bites may become irritated and inflamed. Scratching may cause the bites to become infected. Bed bugs feed at night, so you may not be aware that you were bitten, or the bites can be mistaken for bites from another pest (fleas or mosquitoes).

SPREAD Bed bugs do not jump or fly. They quickly crawl to find a human host, feed for less than 5 minutes, and then hide. Bed bugs like to hide in small places; therefore, it is possible that bed bugs will crawl into luggage, beds, or furniture that is being moved from one place to the next. It is also possible for bed bugs to crawl through small spaces between units in a hotel or apartment building. Because bed bugs can survive for many months without feeding, they may already be present and hidden in apartments or homes that appear to not have any bed bugs.

Remember: Bed bugs are not transmitted from person to person. They are not like lice and will not usually travel directly on a person's body. Bed bugs are spread between residences when they hide and are transported in luggage, furniture, or other items.

SIGNS OF BED BUGS

- If you or your family members notice bites after sleeping that were not there when you went to bed. Because several different kinds of insects look like bed bugs, carefully compare the bugs with good reference images to confirm their identity. If still unsure about the identity of bugs in the home, contact a pest control expert.
- Look for blood stains from crushed bugs or dark red spots (bed bug fecal material) on bed sheets and mattresses. Cast skins, which are empty shells of bed bugs as they grow from one stage to the next, may be present.
- Look for live, crawling bed bugs – usually found around the seams and in the folds of bed mattresses or in crevices of the bed frame. In heavier infestations, live bed bugs may be found further away from the bed (window and door frames, electrical boxes, cracks in floors and ceilings, within furniture, behind picture frames on the wall).

EXCLUSION Childcare and School: Children and students living in households containing bed bugs do not need to be excluded.

TREATMENT A healthcare provider may recommend an antihistamine or corticosteroid to reduce allergic reaction and inflammation due to bed bug bites. Bed bugs are not known to spread any diseases.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- DO NOT bring infested items into the home. **Carefully** inspect clothing and baggage after traveling. Pay attention to cracks, crevices, seams, and folds of suitcases and luggage.
- Use caution when buying used furniture. Inspect all furniture and avoid buying used bed mattresses and bed frames. Taking free furniture items left by the curb for disposal or behind places of business is not recommended.
- After confirming a bed bug infestation in the home, **consult a licensed pest control operator who has experience with bed bugs before beginning any control activities.** (Tenants should contact their property manager or landlord to discuss their respective obligations and to agree on a plan to manage the infestation.)
- Control plans will be made on a case by case basis; the control plan may include the following activities:
 - Reduce clutter to limit the hiding places for bed bugs.
 - Thoroughly clean infested rooms - vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, bed mattresses, bed frames, etc. It may be necessary to move and disassemble furniture during cleaning.
 - Wash all bedding and affected clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes before using again.
 - Caulk or seal all holes in ceilings, walls, and around baseboards.
 - Various insecticide (chemicals that kill insects) treatments may be needed.

The insecticides available are commercial products requiring special equipment and training and are not readily available in “over-the-counter” products. **Insecticides should be applied by a licensed pest control operator.**

- DO NOT apply any insecticides to bed mattresses or on bedding or linens. Work with a certified pest control operator to determine how insecticides will be used and applied in your residence. Insecticide treatments may require you to leave your home for a few hours or even several days. Several treatments may be needed to fully control the problem.

For more information, call Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS) Bureau of Environmental Health Services at 573-751-6095 or 866-628-9891 (8-5 Monday thru Friday) or call your local health department. For more information about bedbugs, refer to University of Missouri’s Extension Office website at:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=G7396>.