

Bed Bugs



What You Need to Know



What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are bugs that feed mostly on human blood.

Adult bed bugs are brown, oval and wingless. They are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6.0 mm) long with short, wide heads and wide, flat bodies.

When filled with blood, bed bugs swell and change colour from brown to dull red. Bed bugs are not known to transmit any human diseases. However, they can cause varying levels of discomfort that may affect your sleeping habits.

What is the life cycle of bed bugs?

Female adult bed bugs lay roughly 200 to 500 eggs over their lifetime. The eggs have a coating that sticks to objects.

Bed bug eggs hatch in six to 17 days. The newly hatched nymphs (infant bed bugs) start to feed immediately. The nymph stage is 14 to 30 days.

The bed bugs' life cycle is typically four to nine weeks. However, the adult bed bug can survive for more than 12 months, because they go into a non-active stage when there is no host to feed on.

How and when do bed bugs feed?

Bed bugs usually feed when it is dark – they generally avoid bright light. They feed mainly on human blood, and feed for three to 15 minutes, depending on their life stage.

After feeding, bed bugs crawl to a hiding place to digest their meal. They do not stay on humans after feeding, and are easily disturbed if any movement occurs.

How do I know I have bed bugs in my home?

There are a number of possible bed bug indicators.

- **Unexplained skin irritation.** Bed bug bites are painless. However, their saliva may cause an allergic reaction, and severe itching and red swollen welts may occur. The size of these welts will vary, depending on a person's sensitivity to the bites. Welts often appear in groups of two to three, and are usually close together.



- **Dark red spots or brown sugar-like matter on bed sheets and clothing.**

Dark spots found on sheets may be digested blood stains from bed bug feedings, or fecal matter.

- **Dried remains of skin (exoskeletons).** Bed bug nymphs will shed their skins, also called exoskeletons, after each feeding. These small, dark skins will vary in size and may be less than $\frac{1}{64}$ inch (roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ mm) to about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch (4.5 mm).

How do bed bugs get into homes?

Bed bugs can infest luggage and furniture items, such as carpets, couches, beds, lamps and tables. If these infested items are brought into a home, the bed bugs may spread.

Bed bugs can move around a home through cracks in walls, pipes, wiring, windows and gutters.

Bed bugs may be found more often in locations that have a high rate of occupant turnover.

Where do bed bugs hide?

Bed bugs hide in dark, protected places. They prefer fabric, wood and paper surfaces, close to where humans sleep.

Bed bugs can hide behind baseboards, under loose carpets and rugs, in the seams and folds of couches, mattresses, box springs and bed frames, and in the cracks and creases of furniture items and luggage.



Why are bed bugs difficult to control?

There are several reasons why bed bugs are difficult to control:

- They are often difficult to see in small numbers.
- They readily detect and avoid many chemical products, and can be resistant to insecticides.
- They are very easily re-introduced to household items, where they spread. There are few products available to control bed bugs and no known attractants.
- Infestations do not indicate poor hygiene or bad housekeeping.

How do I prevent bed bugs?

Follow these tips to prevent a bed bug infestation.

Inspect second-hand furniture and clothing before buying > Before you bring used items into your home (including rental furniture), carefully inspect the items to ensure they are not infested with bed bugs. Look for eggs, nymphs and adults that may be hiding in cracks, creases, folds, seams, tears and loose areas. Also look for the signs of dark red spots or brown sugar-like matter.

Vacuum suitcases > Vacuum suitcases after returning home from a trip, or when buying used luggage. Immediately after vacuuming, the vacuum bag should be removed and disposed of outside your home.

Maintain your home > Keep general maintenance of your home, and regularly wash all bedding and clothing.

Keep your home clean and clutter-free > Do not keep piles of clothes, boxes, toys, shoes and other items on floors, under beds or in closets. These are ideal places for bed bugs to hide.

Inspect your bed regularly > Inspect bed frames, mattresses and box springs. Watch for dark red spots or brown sugar-like matter on sheets or on mattress/box spring edges and seams. Purchase a bed bug resistant mattress cover, and treat the mattress with a bed bug product.

Inspect your furniture regularly > Check dressers and look in crevices. Look under televisions, stereos, tables and other equipment. Search behind pictures and even in stacks of clothing.



How does the Manitoba Housing Authority help get rid of pests in my home?

If you think you have pests in your home, phone the Manitoba Housing Authority (MHA) immediately. The MHA does not recommend that you treat pest problems on your own, because you may cause further infestations.

Call the Manitoba Housing Authority's Housing Communication Centre at 945-8765 in Winnipeg; or toll free at 1-800-661-4663.

Treatment > A professional exterminator will be hired to treat your unit for pests. Your belongings will be respected and taken care of while your home is treated.

With your co-operation, any pest concerns can be treated without complications.

After treatment > The spray residue from the extermination will work for 10 to 14 days after treatment. Do **not** wash the area around baseboards.

Keep clothing and bedding clean and laundered.