
BED BUGS

Information for Homeowners and Tenants

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are insects. *Cimex lectularius* is the species commonly found in homes. Adult bed bugs have oval-shaped bodies with no wings. Prior to feeding, they are about 6 mm (¼") long and flat as paper. They turn dark red and become bloated after feeding. Eggs are whitish, pear-shaped and the size of a pinhead. Clusters of 10-50 eggs can be found in cracks and crevices. Eggs hatch in about 10 days. Bed bugs have a one-year life span during which a female can lay 200-400 eggs depending on food supply and temperature.

There is no evidence that bed bugs transmit disease-causing organisms. Most people are not aware they have been bitten. Bed bugs inject a fluid into their host to get their blood meal. This fluid makes some people sensitive to bites, causing irritation, itching and inflammation. Scratching the bitten areas may lead to infection.



What do bed bugs feed on?

Bed bugs prefer to feed on human blood, but will also bite pets, birds and rats. Bed bugs bite at night and will bite all over a human body, especially around the face, neck, upper torso, arms, and hands. Bed bugs can survive up to one year without feeding. Both male and female bed bugs bite. Fecal spots are often found where they rest. Cast skins will also be found especially where infestations are heavy.

How do bed bugs get into my home or apartment?

Bed bugs are often carried into a home on objects, such as furniture and clothing. Bed bugs can be found in the following areas:

- Seams, creases, tufts, and folds of mattresses and box springs
- Cracks in the bed frame and head board
- Under chairs, couches, beds, and dust covers
- Between cushions of couches and chairs and between curtain folds
- Under area rugs and the edges of carpets
- In drawers, telephones, radios, and clocks
- Behind baseboards and around window and door casings
- Behind electrical plates and under loose wallpaper, paintings and posters
- In cracks of plaster

Health & Environment Facts

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

1. Bed bugs can travel from apartment to apartment along pipes, electrical wiring and other openings.
2. Consult with Public Health or a professional pest control operator to confirm that you have bed bugs.
3. If you live in a rental unit, advise your landlord immediately. You may be required to take actions to rid the unit of bed bugs such as vacuuming, laundering linens and preparing the unit to be sprayed with a pesticide.
4. Inspect your mattress and bed frame, particularly the folds, crevices and underside, and other locations where bed bugs like to hide.
5. Use a nozzle attachment on the vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Vacuum all crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards and any objects close to the bed. It is essential to vacuum daily and empty the vacuum immediately. Always use a vacuum machine that has a disposable dust bag. Discard the bag in a sealed plastic bag in the garbage. Vacuuming prior to insecticide treatment will not only remove the bugs but dirt as well, which will allow the chemicals to penetrate better and improve their residual effect.
6. Wash all your linens in the hottest water possible (60°C) and/or and place them in a hot dryer for 30 minutes. These temperatures will kill all life cycle stages of bed bugs. Place the infested item in a plastic bag in the infested room prior to removal.
7. The alternative to heat is cold treatment or freezing bed bugs. Place the infested item in a plastic bag in the infested room prior to removal. The amount of time in the freezer depends on the size of the item, the larger the item the longer the time. If the freezer is at -20°C, then 2 hours will be sufficient to kill all life cycle stages. However, for the average household freezer, more time may be needed. Dense items may take several days for the center to cool sufficiently to kill the bugs and the longer an item is kept frozen, the more likely the bugs will be destroyed.
8. Remove all unnecessary clutter. Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on wood bed frames, floors, and walls with caulking. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper, tighten loose light switch covers and seal any openings where pipes, wires or other utilities come into your home (pay special attention to walls that are shared between apartments).
9. Monitor daily by setting out glue boards, sticky tape or place petroleum jelly on furniture legs to catch the bed bugs. Closely examine any items that you are bringing into your home. Second hand clothing and used furniture could be infested with bed bugs. Use caution.
10. Consult a professional pest control operator to apply insecticide. Prepare for the pesticide spray by removing everything from dressers, drawers, closets, shelves, cupboards and counter tops. Provide access to all baseboards, keep floor clear, and move all the furniture 2 feet from the wall.

— *Health & Environment Facts* —

Role of Public Health

The Public Health Unit provides information on how to identify bed bugs, how to prevent bringing bed bugs into the home and methods to control a bed bug infestation. The Public Health Unit does not visit a home to identify or confirm a bed bug infestation. Public Health can help identify several of the most common pests. You can bring a sample of a dead pest to one of our offices to be identified.

Preparing your sample:

- Collect a sample of the pest (adults are the easiest to identify).
- Do not squish the bug or put it on tape as identification will be more difficult, if not impossible.
- Put pest(s) in a watertight container (film canister, baby food jar, etc...).
- Please do not bring in live pests. The pest can be stored in the freezer or 70% rubbing alcohol which will kill and preserve it.

Where to bring your sample:

Owen Sound office: 101 17th Street East, 519-376-9420, 1-800-263-3456
Walkerton office: 30 Park Street, 519-881-1920, 1-800-263-3456