

BED BUGS

What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, parasitic insects that feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Bed bugs are reddish-brown in color, wingless, range from 1mm to 7mm, and can live several months without a blood meal.



Where can they be found?

Bed bug infestations usually occur around or near the areas where people sleep. These areas include apartments, shelters, rooming houses, hotels, cruise ships, buses, trains, and dorm rooms. They hide during the day in places such as seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, inside cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper, or any other

clutter or objects around a bed.

Do bed bugs spread disease?

Bed bugs should not be considered as a medical or public health hazard. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. Bed bugs can be an annoyance because their presence may cause itching and loss of sleep. Sometimes the itching can lead to excessive scratching that can sometimes increase the chance of a secondary skin infection.

Signs and Symptoms

One of the easiest ways to identify a bed bug infestation is by the bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands, or any other body parts while sleeping. However, these bite marks may take as long as 14 days to develop in some people so it is important to look for other clues when determining if bed bugs have infested an area. These signs include:

- Bed bugs' exoskeletons after molting
- Bed bugs in the fold of mattresses and sheets
- Rusty-colored blood spots due to their blood-filled fecal material that they excrete on the mattress or nearby furniture, and
- A sweet musty odor

How are bed bugs treated and prevented?

The best way to treat a bite is to avoid scratching the area and apply antiseptic creams or lotions and take an antihistamine. Bed bug infestations are commonly treated by insecticide spraying or heat treating. If you suspect that you have an infestation, contact your landlord or professional pest control company that is experienced with treating bed bugs. The best way to prevent bed bugs is regular inspection for the signs of an infestation.

Heat Treatments

Whole room heat treatments involve a Pest Management Professional (PMP) bringing in specially designed equipment to raise the temperature in your home to kill the bed bugs. Bed bugs and eggs die within 90 minutes at 118°F (48°C) or immediately at 122°F (50°C). Remote thermometers are placed throughout the home, to make sure the right temperatures are reached. A heat treatment typically takes between six and eight hours, depending on the condition of the area being treated.

During the heat treatment pets and any heat sensitive items that may melt or be damaged at temperatures up to 150°F degrees should be removed from the area being treated. Make sure you discuss this with your Pest Management Professional as anything not treated with heat will need to be treated in another way. Heat treatments do not offer any residual effects and your home could quickly become reinfested after a heat treatment if prevention steps are not taken.

Insecticide treatments

Insecticide treatments can be a very effective way of controlling bed bugs when used correctly. There are many different brands of insecticides but one of each of the following broad categories should be used.

- A fast-acting, contact insecticide for use on surfaces that humans frequently touch, i.e. sofas.
- A residual insecticide for inside furniture, cracks and crevices and the underside of surfaces we touch.
- A dust insecticide for cracks, crevices and voids, such as electrical outlets and baseboards.

Your PMP may offer other services such as container heat treatments, steam applications, or freezing infested items. Usually, items treated with these optional controls do not require an insecticide treatment and therefore fewer insecticides are needed.

A thorough insecticide treatment should involve 2-3 visits from the PMP, as it is unlikely all the bed bugs will be killed in the initial treatment. An insecticide treatment typically takes about 30 minutes to 2 hours per room depending on size and condition of the room. Once the treatment is complete you should wait until all the insecticides have dried before

reentering your home, or until the PMP says it is safe to re-enter.

Before any treatment the PMP should provide you with a detailed list of instructions for how to prepare your home. It is very important to

follow these directions closely as properly preparing the home is a very important step in any treatment process. Improper preparation is one of the main reasons that treatment for bed bugs fail.

Preparing for Treatment

Visit this link to learn how to prepare for bed bug treatment: <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs/preparing-treatment-against-bed-bugs>

Common Reasons Why Insecticides Fail

- Too much clutter
- Improper preparation of the treatment area
- New bed bugs brought in from other locations
- Not allowing enough time for a pesticide to work
- Failing to treat adjacent areas (apartment units, rooms, etc.) to protect against migration
- Disregarding recommended label rates
- Not following up on a treatment in an appropriate time-frame
- Having bed bug populations that are resistant to a specific insecticide.