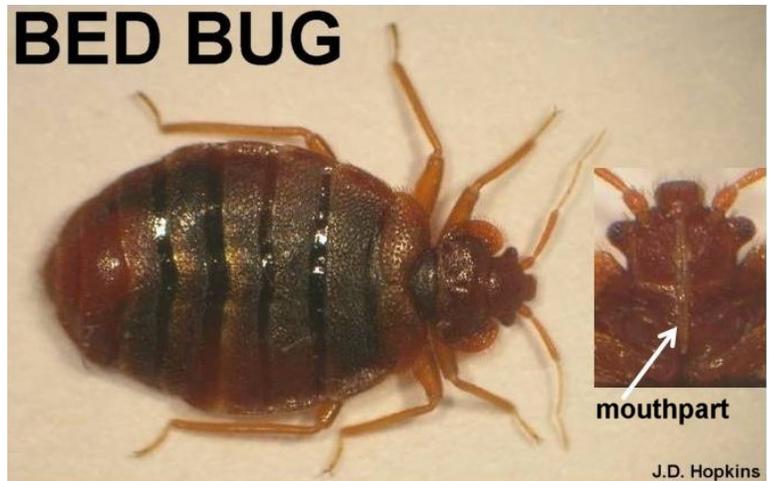


## Bed Bug Facts and Frequently Asked Questions

In a recent survey of commercial pest management professionals (2015 Bugs Without Borders) conducted by the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) and the University of Kentucky, bed bugs are increasing as a problem nationwide. As mentioned in the survey, more than 90% of respondents had treated bed bugs in apartments, condominiums and single-family homes in 2015. Other places experiencing increases in bed bug encounters as reported by survey respondents included:

- Nursing homes (reported by 58% of respondents, up from 46% in 2013);
- Office buildings (reported by 45% of respondents, up from 36% in 2013);
- Schools and day care centers (reported by 43% of respondents, up from 41% in 2013);
- Hospitals (reported by 36% of respondents, up from 33% in 2013);
- Doctor's offices/outpatient facilities (reported by 33% of respondents, up from 26% in 2013);
- Transportation (train/bus/taxi) (reported by 29% of respondents, up from 21% in 2013);
- Retail stores (reported by 20% of respondents, up from 15% in 2013);
- Movie theaters (reported by 16% of respondents, up from 10% in 2013).

The common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius* Linnaeus 1758 / Family: Cimicidae) is an ectoparasitic insect (a parasite which lives on the outside of the host's body). Bed bugs feed only on the blood of humans and other warm-blooded hosts. Unfed adults are mahogany colored and flat with a broad oval shape, while the young nymphs are nearly colorless. When fed, adult bed bugs become swollen and elongated. Adults are about a 1/4 inch in length while nymphs range from about 1.5 mm to 4 to 5 mm in length.



Bed bugs are often found in cracks, crevices, and recesses of beds and bed parts, and on folds and creases of mattresses and box springs, hence the common name. Because of their cryptic behavior, bed bugs also like to hide in other small cracks and crevices close to where humans sleep or rest. They can be found behind electrical switch plates, baseboards, picture frames, loose wallpaper, upholstery, and in furniture crevices. Bed bugs are also known to survive in temporary or alternative habitats, such as backpacks and under the seats in cars, busses and trains.

Bed bugs usually come out at night for a blood meal. However, they are opportunistic insects and can take a blood meal during the day, especially in heavily-infested areas. Bed bugs usually require 5 to 10 minutes to engorge with blood. After feeding, they move to secluded places and hide for 5 to 10 days. During this time, they do not feed but instead digest their meal, mate, and lay eggs.

Although bed bugs can dine on any warm-blooded animal, they primarily feed on humans. Bed bugs have not been demonstrated to transmit diseases, but their bites can become red, itchy welts.

## **BED BUG CONTROL IS NOT A DO IT YOURSELF JOB!**

The average individual with a bed bug problem lacks the skill and expertise to effectively eliminate the infestation even after multiple tries. If you are unlucky enough to have to deal with a bed bug infestation, you should contract the services of a reputable pest management professional (pest control company) that has experience in eliminating bed bug infestations. Shop around and ask for references.

Bed bugs do not just appear. They have to be inadvertently carried in from an area that was already infested (**BE AWARE!!! - BED BUGS ARE GREAT HITCHHIKERS**). In the case of multi-family housing, a unit may become infested with bed bugs that were initially brought in to an adjacent apartment.

While individuals need the help of a professional to eliminate an existing bed bug problem, they must play a primary role in prevention. Some tips to prevent accidental introduction of bed bugs to your home include:

- Vacuum suitcases after returning from a vacation.
- Check your bedsheets for tell-tale blood spots.
- Consider bringing a large plastic trash bag to keep your suitcase in during hotel stays.
- Carry a small flashlight on trips to assist you with quick visual inspections of sleeping quarters.
- Never bring second-hand furniture, especially mattresses and box springs, into a home without thoroughly examining for signs of a bed bug infestation. You might consider having a pest control professional inspect the furniture as it is difficult to detect an infestation if you are untrained.
- Regularly inspect areas where pets sleep for signs of bed bugs.
- Bed bugs are elusive creatures, so it is imperative to seek professional help to address an infestation.

## **BED BUG FAQs**

### **What are bed bugs?**

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, parasitic insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown in color, wingless, and about a 1/4 inch in length (roughly the size of Lincoln's head on a penny). Nymphs (immature stages) range from about 1.5 mm to 4 to 5 mm in length and are almost colorless. Adult bed bugs can live several months without a blood meal and under laboratory conditions have been known to live for up to a year.

### **Where are bed bugs found?**

Bed bugs are found across the globe from North and South America, to Africa, Asia and Europe. Although the presence of bed bugs has traditionally been seen as a problem in developing countries, it has recently been spreading rapidly in parts of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other parts of Europe. Bed bugs have been found in five-star hotels and resorts and their presence is not determined by the cleanliness of the living conditions where they are 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. Bed bugs can travel over 100 feet in a night searching for a blood meal, but tend to live within about 8 feet of where people sleep.

### **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.

### **What health risks do bed bugs pose?**

A bed bug bite affects each person differently. Bite responses can range from an absence of any physical signs of the bite, to a small bite mark, to a serious allergic reaction. Bed bugs are not considered to be dangerous; however, an allergic reaction to several bites may require medical attention.

### **Can I get sick from bed bugs?**

Bed bugs are not known to spread any diseases to humans. However, their bites can leave behind itchy, red welts which can become infected from scratching.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of a bed bug infestation?**

One of the easiest ways to identify a bed bug infestation is by the tell-tale bite marks left on the face, neck, arms, hands, or other body parts that the victim receives 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:

- the 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
- a sweet musty odor

### **How do I know if I've been bitten by a bed bug?**

It is hard to tell if you've been bitten by a bed bug unless you find bed bugs or signs of infestation. When bed bugs bite, they inject an anesthetic and an anticoagulant that prevents a person from realizing they are being bitten. Most people do not realize they have been bitten until bite marks appear anywhere from one to several days after the initial bite. The bite marks are similar to that of a mosquito or a flea (a slightly swollen and red area that may itch and be irritating.) The bite marks may be random or appear in a straight line. Other symptoms of bed bug bites include insomnia, anxiety, and skin problems that arise from profuse scratching of the bites.

Because bed bug bites affect everyone differently, some people may have no reaction and will not develop bite marks or any other visible signs of being bitten. Other people may be allergic to the bed bugs and can react adversely to the bites. These allergic symptoms can include enlarged bite marks, painful swellings at the bite site, and, on rare occasions, anaphylaxis.

### **How did I get bed bugs?**

Bed bugs are experts at hiding. Their slim flat bodies allow them to fit into the smallest of spaces and stay there for long periods of time, even without a blood meal. Bed bugs are usually transported from place to place as people travel. The bed bugs travel in the seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, folded clothes, bedding, furniture, and anywhere else they can find to hide. Most people do not realize they are transporting stow-away bed bugs as they travel from location to location, infesting new areas as they travel.

### **Who is at risk for getting bed bugs?**

Everyone is at risk for getting bed bugs when visiting an infested area. However, anyone who travels frequently and shares living and sleeping quarters where other people have previously slept has a higher risk of being bitten and or spreading a bed bug infestation.

### **How are bed bug bites and infestations treated and prevented?**

Bed bug bites usually do not pose a serious medical threat. 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 with an array of non-chemical means and targeted insecticide treatments. If you suspect that you have an infestation, contact your landlord or professional pest control company that has experience in treating bed bugs. The best way to prevent bed bugs is regular inspection for the signs of an infestation. Infestations caught in the early stages are easier to eliminate than infestations that have gone unchecked for a long period of time.

### **Has there really been a resurgence in bed bugs in the U.S. and how do you know?**

There has been an increase in bed bug infestations. In recent surveys (NPMA and University of Kentucky), 95 percent of pest management companies report that their company has encountered a bed bug infestation in the past year. Prior to 2000, only 25 percent of respondents had encountered a bed bug infestation. In addition, one in five Americans now report they have had a bed bug infestation or know someone who has encountered bed bugs at home or in a hotel.

### **Where are bed bugs being found?**

These pests are not limited to any one specific type of dwelling. Pest control companies have been reporting the infestations everywhere including single family homes, multi-family housing, apartments, hotels, hospitals, schools and college campuses, office buildings, retail stores, movie theaters and even public transportation. Nowadays, even five-star hotels and high-end clothing stores are susceptible to infestation.

### **What states have been affected?**

Pest control companies have reported bed bug activity on a national scale. Bed bugs are being found in all states from the East to the West Coast and everywhere in between.

### **Why are bed bugs so hard to treat?**

Bed bugs should not be equated with filth or sanitation problems in hotels or in homes. Bed bugs are very elusive, transient pests. They are often found in other areas besides the bed. And they are hardy. They can live for up to a year without eating and can withstand a wide range of temperatures from nearly freezing up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit. Bed bugs can be controlled with vigilance, constant inspection and treatment by professional pest control companies.

### **What can a consumer do to protect themselves from bed bug infestations?**

To prevent bed bug infestations, consumers need to be vigilant in assessing their surroundings. When returning from a trip, check your luggage and clothing. If you think you may have a bed bug

infestation, contact a pest control professional. Once established, this is not a pest that can be controlled with do-it-yourself measures.

### **Why are bed bugs an issue for hotels, visitors, and homeowners?**

Bed bugs leave itchy, bloody welts on human skin. Adult bed bugs can live for up to a year without eating, making them especially hard to control. Once inside a hotel or home, bed bugs can easily spread from room to room via their own power by crawling or they can be carried by us in vacuum cleaners, on clothing, luggage, etc.

### **Are bed bugs just in beds?**

Bed bugs are not just in beds. They can be in chair cushions, sofas, behind electrical outlets, in cracks and crevices around baseboards, or even behind picture frames. In other words, they can be hiding (harboring) out of sight pretty much anywhere.

### **How can you control bed bugs?**

Any effective bed bug control strategy should start with a careful, thorough inspection by a pest control professional of all known and suspected spots where bed bugs may be harboring. This is not a pest that can be controlled effectively with do-it-yourself measures. As they are discovered, the pest control professional will develop a treatment and control strategy with the customer depending on the extent of the infestation.

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Bed Bug FAQs and the National Pest Management Association Bed Bug FAQs. 2017.

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