



# Bed Bug FAQ



## What is a Bed Bug?



Bed bugs are small flat insects that feed on the blood of sleeping people and animals. Bed bugs are white (just after molting) to reddish-brown in color, wingless, and range from the size of a poppy seed (right after hatching) to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in length as an adult. Because bed bugs never develop wings they cannot fly and don't jump but they do crawl, run, climb, and are excellent hitch hikers.

Bed bugs like hiding during the day in mattress seams, box springs, bed frames, headboards, cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper, or under clutter, but come out at night. They can travel up to 100 feet but usually live within 8 feet of where people sleep. The EPA has a top ten bed bug tips list that is very helpful in determining steps to take if you suspect you have bed bugs.

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/bed-bugs-faq-fs.html>



## How do I know if I have a bed bug infestation?

One of the easiest ways to identify a bed bug infestation is by the bite marks that appear on the face, neck, arms, hands and any other body part. Bites may take as long as 14 days to develop in some people so check for evidence such as exoskeletons from molting bed bugs, egg shells or live bed bugs in the folds of mattresses and sheets. You can also look for black or rusty spots, which is their blood filled fecal matter, on mattresses or furniture.

## When do bed bugs feed?

Bed bugs typically feed at night, but they have been known to also feed during the day.

## What does a bite look like, does it hurt?

When bed bugs bite, they inject an anesthetic and an anticoagulant that prevents a person from feeling the bite. Because bites usually occur on exposed areas of skin while people are sleeping, most people do not realize they have been bitten until marks appear. 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.



## Will I get a disease from bed bug bites?

Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease. Bed bug bites usually require little attention other than antiseptic creams or lotions to prevent infection at the bite site.

## How do I get rid of my bed bug infestation?

Bed bugs are challenging pests to control. Management consists primarily of finding places where the bed bugs hide in the daytime and cleaning these sites as thoroughly as possible. They hide in many tiny places, so inspections and treatments must be very thorough. Early in an infestation bed bugs are likely to be found only about the seams, tufts, or folds of mattresses or daybed covers, but later they spread to crevices in the bed frames. In severe infestations they may be found behind baseboards, window and door casings, pictures and picture frames, in furniture, loosened wallpaper, cracks in plaster and the like.

Control of the situation is best achieved by an integrated pest management approach, which involves several pest prevention and removal strategies. There are several good intergraded pest management articles that take in to consideration the type of household situation in which you live, and you can find one at

<http://www.entomology.cornell.edu/cals/entomology/extension/idl/upload/Bed-Bugs.pdf> If you decide to use pesticides please review the Environmental Protection Agency's Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety at [http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/Cit\\_Guide/citguide.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/Cit_Guide/citguide.pdf)

To help get rid of bed bugs, you should:

- Vacuum the floors and baseboards in rooms that have bedbugs often and empty the vacuum after you have finished.
- Wash and dry bedding and clothing at high temperatures (120°F) for a minimum of 20 minutes to kill bed bugs.
- Use heat or cold. Heat infested articles and/or areas through to at least 113° F for 1 hour. The higher the temperature, the shorter the time needed to kill bed bugs at all life stages. Cold treatment (below 0° F for at least 4 days) can eliminate some infestations. The cooler the temperature, the less time needed to kill bed bugs.
- Wrap in plastic and placing outdoors in a hot, sunny location, or closed vehicle for at least a day any items that cannot be put in a washer or dryer.
- Keep records – including dates when and locations where pests are found.

## How can I keep from getting a bed bug infestation?

- Check secondhand furniture, beds, and couches for any [signs of bed bug infestation](#), as described below before bringing them home.
- Use a protective cover that encases mattresses and box springs which eliminates many hiding spots. The light color of the encasement makes bed bugs easier to see. Be sure to purchase a high quality encasement that will resist tearing and check the encasements regularly for holes.
- Eliminate clutter in your home to reduce hiding places for bed bugs.
- When traveling:
  - In hotel rooms, use luggage racks to hold your luggage when packing or unpacking rather than setting your luggage on the bed or floor.
  - Check the mattress and headboard before sleeping.
  - Upon returning home, unpack directly into a washing machine and inspect your luggage carefully.

### **Pictures available from:**

<http://identify.us.com/bed-bugs/bedbug-images/>

[http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed\\_Bugs\\_CDC-EPA\\_Statement.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Publications/Bed_Bugs_CDC-EPA_Statement.htm)

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs/>