

# FACTSHEET **Bed Bugs**



## **What Are Bed Bugs?**

An oval-shaped bug with a short broad head, bed bugs feed on blood. When they haven't eaten, bed bugs look like an apple seed and are about 6 to 10 mm long.

Once they eat they turn dark red and swell in size. Nymphs are shaped like adults but are yellowish white in color. Bed bug eggs are white (about 1 mm long) and pear shaped. The eggs have a sticky coating and are deposited in cracks and crevices.

## **Can bed bugs make me sick?**

Bed bugs do not spread disease and most people don't even know they have been bitten. For those who are sensitive to bed bug bites, they may have an allergic reaction such as itchy welts or small red bumps.

Most bed bug bites go away on their own and do not require treatment. Keep the area clean and do not scratch. If the bites are very itchy a physician may prescribe cream or antihistamines to relieve the itchiness.

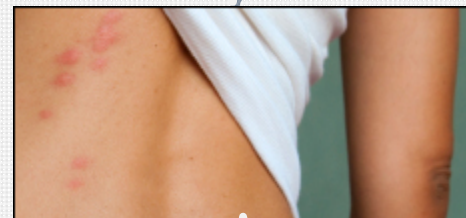
## **How do I know if I have bed bugs?**

Adult bed bugs are large enough to see. During the early stages of an infestation bed bugs are more likely to be found on box springs, mattresses, headboards and upholstered furniture. As they spread, they may hide behind baseboards, pictures, wall paper, window and door frames. Bed bugs hide in cracks and crevices during the day and come out to feed at night.

A quick and easy first step to check for bed bugs is to put double-sided tape around your bed or furniture. When the bed bugs walk across it, they will become stuck. They tend to walk where pipes and electrical sockets break the walls, along baseboards and under



*A photo of a bed bug after feeding. Two eggs are next to it. The rice provides size comparison.*



*Bed bug bites*

carpet edges. If you see a bed bug, wait before killing it and see where it is going. It may lead you to a nest that may be hidden.

Signs to look for are:

- Most infestations start around beds and spread throughout a room and beyond.
- You will often notice blood stains (reddish black) and spots of fecal matter on furniture, sheets, pillows, mattress and box spring before you notice the bed bug.
- Bed bugs usually bite people at night while they are sleeping. Bites can occur on any exposed skin; symptoms vary with the individual.
- Unpleasant sweet musty odor may occur with a severe infestation.

### How do bed bugs get into my home?

Bed bugs can be carried into a home on second hand items such as furniture, clothing or electronics.

- Check items for signs of bed bugs. Check all seams, cracks and crevices of the mattress and box spring – look for blood spots, fecal matter and live insects. If you are concerned that any item may have a bed bug infestation – do not bring that item into your home.
- Wash and dry second hand clothes on a hot setting.

Bed bugs can be brought into your home on your clothing or belongings.

- When staying in hotels - **or visiting friends and family** - keep the following in mind:
  - Check the room and furniture for signs of bed bugs. Check all seams and crevices of the mattress and box spring, look for blood spots, fecal matter or live insects. Request a different room if you find bed bugs.
  - Keep all belongings in your luggage and keep your luggage stored on the luggage rack or on a shelf – away from the floor. If this is not possible, place your luggage in a plastic bag or bin to help prevent bed bugs from entering your luggage.
  - When you return home, keep your luggage in an isolated area of your home and inspect it for signs of bed bug activity.
  - Wash all clothes in the hottest water possible and dry them in the dryer on the hot setting.

Bed bugs can be brought in by visitors.

- Ask visitors who come from an infested home to check their clothing for hitchhiking bed bugs and to store their belongings in a sealed plastic bag or container.