

# KNOW THE FACTS!

## BED BUGS

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### What are bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*)?

Bed bugs are a type of wingless insect found worldwide, that feed off the blood of humans and other mammals such as birds and bats. Bed bugs are not known to transmit diseases to humans.

### Who is at risk of getting bed bugs?

Anyone who comes in direct contact with bed bugs can carry them into their homes in clothes, second hand beds and bedding, furniture, or suitcases. Infestations are not tied to unsanitary living conditions; even world-class hotels have reported bed bug problems.

### How are bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs may be found in homes, motels, hostels, movie theaters, transportation depots, and rest rooms. They may be accidentally moved with clothes, suitcases, furniture, and other personal items. Bed bugs may also be transported in second-hand or rental furniture. Bed bugs do not fly or jump, but they move quickly over floors, walls, ceilings, and furniture.

### What are the symptoms of bed bugs?

Red itchy welts are an indication of an infestation. Bed bug “bites” occur when the bed bug is actually drawing blood. Saliva that is injected during the bite can produce swellings on the skin that may itch and become irritated and infected when scratched. It may take as long as 14 days for a welt to appear from a bed bug “bite.” Common areas on the body that are affected involve the arms and shoulders. For the most part, bed bugs only feed in the dark. During the day they hide in dark cracks or crevices.

### What is the treatment for bed bugs?

It is important to note that bed bugs do not carry any human diseases. Suggestions to treat the bites include:

- Resist the urge to scratch. Scratching may only intensify the itch and cause and infection.
- Wash the bites with antiseptic soap to reduce the risk of infection.
- Apply an ice pack frequently to help relieve swelling.
- See your health care provider if you develop an infection.

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### BED BUGS (cont.)

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#### How should I check for bed bugs?

Bed bugs are difficult to identify because of their small size (1/4 to 3/8 inch) and because they like to hide in dark cracks or crevices. Usually the first sign of a bed bug infestation is the appearance of small rusty spots on your mattresses and bed linens. These are bed bug droppings and blood spots. There may be an offensive sweet odor in rooms with heavy infestation. At first, bed bugs are likely to be found only on the tufts, seams and folds of mattresses and daybed covers; later they spread into crevices in bed frames. Once they multiply, they may be found in baseboards; window and door casings; pictures and picture moldings; loosened wallpaper; cracks in plaster and partitions; and in furniture such as couches and stuffed chairs.

#### How can I prevent bed bugs?

Preventing bed bugs can be difficult, especially in homes that have many cracks and crevices, or loose wallpaper. Indirect measures can go a long way in controlling bed bugs: wash bedding and mattress pads, steam-clean mattresses, and clean furnishings. Prevent bed bugs from getting into homes by removing debris from around the house, repairing cracks in walls, and caulking windows and doors. Simple methods include coating the legs of beds with petroleum jelly or double-sided tape so bed bugs will not be able to climb onto the bed. Putting the legs of the bed frame in empty cans or glass jars also help since bed bugs cannot fly or jump.

#### What can I do if my home is infested with bed bugs?

Complete elimination of a bed bug infestation may be difficult without the services of a knowledgeable Pest Control Service. It may even take as many as five or more treatments to gain control of an infestation. Do-it-yourself measures used by homeowners and renters sometimes cause more problems than benefits.

#### Some general guidelines are:

- Reduce the amount of clutter to achieve a good treatment and eliminate hiding places.
- Inspect any furniture being brought into your home for bed bugs.
- When returning from a trip, inspect your luggage and clothes for bed bugs.
- Brushing, vacuuming, and steam cleaning of infested mattresses and pillows is effective in killing bed bugs living in seams and buttons. Dispose vacuumed contents in a sealed plastic bag.
- Find the cracks, crevices, and other places where the bugs hide in the daytime and apply an insecticide directly into those places. If you continue to see bugs after 2 weeks, spray again.
- To treat a bed, take apart the bed and spray the slats, springs, and frame with an insecticide; apply enough to wet them thoroughly. Use only a household residual insecticide product labeled for bedding control.
- Cover mattresses with cotton covers and box springs with plastic covers.
- Wash bedding and garments in hot (120° F) water.
- Put clothing in a dryer for at least five minutes to kill bed bugs.
- Spray bed bugs with alcohol (use small plastic spray bottle and 90 percent rubbing alcohol)

*If you rent a home or apartment within Hamilton County (excluding cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville or Springdale) and you think you have bed bugs, please contact the Hamilton County Public Health at (513) 946-7832. Sanitarians will work with your landlord to eliminate the problem.*



**HAMILTON COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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