

## **Bedbugs**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What are bedbugs?**

Bedbugs are flat brownish insects. They are shaped like an apple seed and visible to the naked eye. Before feeding, adults are six to 10 mm long (1/4 inch), flat and brown. After a feeding, they swell in size and can become bright or dark red. They are wingless and cannot fly or jump. They hide during the day and come out at night in areas where people sleep.

#### **Can bedbugs be seen with the naked eye?**

Yes, if there is a bedbug on you or crawling around on your sheets, you will likely see it. The problem is that bedbugs do not often just crawl around in the open. They stay well hidden in tight spaces during the day, and come out only at night for feeding; however, the nymph stages and eggs are quite small and very hard to see.

#### **Where are bedbugs found?**

Bedbugs can be found throughout the world, and are constantly being transplanted due to the sale and transport of used furniture, clothing, luggage and other shipped goods.

Bedbugs 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.

Bedbug 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.

## **What has caused the recent rise in bedbug activity?**

In the last decade bedbug activity has increased dramatically due to several factors. Most sources cite the increased affordability of world travel and the popularity of oceanic cruising as key factors. Additionally, the expanding global marketplace has led to an increase in travel and shipping to-and-from developing areas of the world, where modern sanitation and public health are limited.

## **Who is at risk for getting bedbugs?**

Everyone is at risk for getting bedbugs when visiting an infected 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 bedbug infestation.

## **How do bedbugs get into my home?**

Bedbugs cannot fly or jump but can hide in extremely small locations because of their flat bodies. This can include:

- Seams and folds of mattresses and box springs
- Cracks in bed frame and head board
- Between cushions of chairs and couches
- Behind baseboards or electrical plates and under loose wallpaper or paintings
- Cracks in plaster and floor

Bedbugs can be carried into a home on objects such as furniture, clothing or luggage. Bedbugs can also travel from apartment to apartment along pipes, electrical wiring and other openings. Bedbugs do not indicate a lack of cleanliness.

## **How do I keep bedbugs from coming into my home?**

The best way to deal with bedbugs is to avoid bringing them into your home.

- Check all used goods closely for bedbugs and bedbug eggs.
- When travelling, make a detailed inspection of your room, especially the mattress, box spring and headboard. Look for live bedbugs, bedbug eggs, and dark spotting or pepper like material.
- Put your luggage on a luggage rack away from the bed, inside the bathtub or inside a plastic bag.

### **When are bedbugs most active?**

Bedbugs are almost always active at night. When seen during daylight hours, it is assumed that the nesting area has been disturbed or that they are in extreme hunger.

### **How will I know I have bedbugs?**

You may suspect bedbugs if you wake up with bites or welts on your body that are itchy and sometimes painful, especially if this happens repeatedly. Other signs of infestation can be detected with a magnifying glass and a flashlight. A large bedbug population will produce a distinctively bitter odour.

### **What to look for:**

- Tiny black spots (feces) on linens or other objects
- Small red stains (blood) where bedbugs have been crushed
- Translucent light brown cast skins
- Live bedbugs

### **How can I tell if I have been bitten by a bedbug?**

While many insects such as spiders, fleas, ticks and mosquitoes can leave bite marks, those of the bedbug will typically appear in straight rows of two or three bites. Always check with a healthcare professional for proper identification and treatment.

### **Will I get sick from bedbugs?**

While bedbug bites are uncomfortable, they are not known to transmit disease and are not considered harmful. In some cases, bedbug bites can develop into painful welts that may last for several days. See a healthcare professional if this persists.

### **Do bedbugs spread disease?**

Bedbugs should not be considered as a medical or public health hazard. Bedbugs are not known to spread disease. Bedbugs 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.

## **I keep my home very clean. Where did the bedbugs come from?**

Bedbugs, unlike roaches, are not sanitation driven, so a clean home is just as susceptible to bedbugs as an unclean one. All that is needed for an infestation to occur is for an infested item to be introduced into an un-infested environment. Bedbugs are most likely to be introduced upon returning from travel, particularly out of the country. They can also hitch a ride into your home on items purchased at second-hand stores or on furniture and bedding that is delivered to your home from an infested location.

## **How do I prevent bedbugs from entering my home?**

People often bring bedbugs into their homes via infested luggage, furniture, bedding or clothing. Bedbugs can hitch a ride on items purchased second-hand, or from furniture and bedding that is delivered to your home. Bedbugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices, cracks and ventilation ducts in walls and floors.

- Regular house cleaning, including vacuuming your mattress, can help to prevent an infestation.
- Clean up clutter to help reduce the number of places bedbugs can hide.
- Wash clothing and inspect luggage immediately after returning from a trip.
- Inspect used furniture for bedbugs before bringing it into your home.
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture into your home.

## **When traveling, how do I avoid bedbugs?**

- Look for blood spots or live insects in the seams, cracks and crevices of the mattress, box spring, and other furniture. Request a different room if you find evidence of bedbugs.
- Keep all belongings in your luggage. Keep luggage off the bed and floor - use the suitcase valet stand or luggage rack. Consider storing your luggage and belongings in sealed plastic bags during your stay.
- If possible, move the bed away from the wall. Tuck in all bed sheets and keep blankets from touching the floor.
- When packing to come home, place clothing in sealed plastic bags.
- Upon returning home, keep your luggage in an isolated area, such as the garage. Inspect the luggage. Take your clothes from the plastic bags and place them directly into the washing machine. Wash all your clothes in hot water and put them in a hot dryer for at least 30 minutes.

## **What do bites from bedbugs look like?**

Skin reactions from bedbug bites vary from person to person. Bites may go unnoticed or may be mistaken for flea or mosquito bites or other skin conditions. The most common skin reaction to bedbug bites are itchy red bite marks that appear clustered or in a straight line, often along the edge of clothing or where sheets were pulled up to a person's skin. Small swollen red bumps are also common. In rare cases, people may develop large, often itchy, red welts. A single bedbug bite is similar to a flea bite, except that a red area does not occur in the centre. Flea bites tend to be found around the ankles while bedbugs tend to bite any exposed area of the body while a person is sleeping, such as the face, neck, arms, hands or legs.

## **How do I stop itching from bedbug bites?**

Most bedbug bites go away by themselves and don't need treatment. Keep the skin clean and try not to scratch. Over-the-counter, anti-itching cream for insect bites can help relieve the itching. If the bites are very itchy, your health care provider may prescribe cream or antihistamines to relieve the itchiness. Oral antibiotics may be prescribed for any secondary skin infection from excessive scratching.

## **How do I get rid of bedbugs?**

The best way to control bedbugs is to use an integrated pest management approach, which combines a variety of control techniques that pose the least risk to human health and the environment.

1. Confirm that you have bedbugs. Contact a pest control company for bedbug identification help.
2. Use your vacuum's nozzle attachment to capture the bedbugs and their eggs. Vacuum all seams and crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards, and any other objects close to the bed or furniture in the home found to be harbouring bedbugs. It is essential to vacuum daily and immediately place the vacuum's contents into a sealed plastic bag and throw it away in an outdoor garbage can.
3. Wash all your linens in hot water and place them in a hot dryer for at least 30 minutes.
4. Cover your mattress, box spring and pillows with a certified bedbug cover encasement.
5. Remove all unnecessary clutter.

6. Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on wood bed frames, floors and walls with caulking. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper, tighten loose light switch covers and seal any openings where pipes, wires or other utilities come into your home. Pay special attention to apartments or rooms that share a wall - bedbugs can move through extremely small gaps to infest new areas.
7. Monitor nightly to catch the bedbugs. Trapping provides evidence of bedbugs, but it shouldn't be used as the sole method of control because it probably won't catch all the bedbugs.
8. Closely examine any items that you are moving around in your home or are bringing in. If you throw away infested items, make sure that no one else will want to use them again - wrap them in plastic and tape off the edges and attach a sign saying, "BEDBUGS", "Bedbug infestation" or something similar.
9. Contact a professional pest control company to assist you with these control steps and to see if pesticides or other bedbug control strategies should be included.
10. Never use pesticides that are intended to be used outdoors, inside your home. Bug bombs, or total release foggers, are not effective in controlling bedbugs. Bedbug infestations can be difficult to control.

If you find bedbugs in your New Brunswick public housing unit, immediately contact your local office of the Department of Social Development.

### **Where can I get more information on bedbugs?**

More information can be found on the New Brunswick public health website at the following address: [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/healthy\\_environments/content/insect\\_and\\_mite.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/healthy_environments/content/insect_and_mite.html)