

## Bed Bugs

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

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on the blood of mammals and birds. Adult bed bugs are oval, wingless and rusty red colored, and have flat bodies, antennae, and small eyes. They are visible to the naked eye but often hide in cracks and crevices. They can live in furniture, cushions, mattresses, and walls in your home. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become a brighter red. In homes, bed bugs feed primarily on the blood of humans, usually at night when people are sleeping.

### **What does a bed bug bite feel and look like?**

Typically, the bite is painless and rarely awakens a sleeping person. However, on sensitive people it can produce large, itchy welts on the skin. Welts from bed bug bites do not have a red spot in the center – those welts are more characteristic of fleabites.

### **Are bed bugs dangerous?**

*There are currently no known cases of disease associated with bed bug bites.* Most people are not aware that they have been bitten. People who are more sensitive to the bite can have localized allergic reactions. Scratching the bitten areas may lead to infection.

### **How long do bed bugs live?**

The typical life span of a bed bug is about 10 months. They can survive for weeks to months without feeding.

### **How does a home become infested with bed bugs?**

In most cases, bed bugs are transported from infested areas to non-infested areas when they cling to someone's clothing or crawl into luggage, furniture, or bedding that is then brought into a home.

### **How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?**

If you have bed bugs you may also notice itchy welts on you or your family members' skin. You may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed bed bugs, or dark spots from bed bug droppings in your home. Bed bugs often hide in or near beds and bedroom furniture, and in the tufts, seams, and folds of mattresses and daybed covers. In more severe infestations, bed bugs may spread to cracks and crevices in bed frames and box springs; behind headboards; inside nightstands; behind baseboards, window and door casings, pictures, and moldings; and in nearby furniture, loosened wallpaper, and cracks in plaster and flooring. Bed bugs may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, and other clutter near sleeping areas.

### **How can I get rid of bed bugs?**

The best method to deal with bed bugs is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to human health and the environment. These techniques are:

1. Consult a professional Pest Control operator to confirm that you have bed bugs.
2. Inspect your mattress and bed frame, particularly the folds, crevices and the underside, and other locations where bed bugs like to hide.
3. Use a nozzle attachment on the vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Vacuum all crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards and any objects close to the bed. It is essential to vacuum daily and empty the vacuum immediately.
4. Wash all your linens and place them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes. Consider covering your pillows and mattress with a plastic cover.
5. Remove all unnecessary clutter.
6. Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on wooden 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 walls that are shared between apartments).
7. Monitor daily by setting out glue boards or sticky tape (carpet tape works well) to catch the bed bugs. Closely examine any items that you are bringing into your home. Consult professional pest control services and discuss options that pose the least risk to humans and the environment.

### **Are pesticides necessary for getting rid of bed bugs?**

First and foremost, discuss techniques for getting rid of bed bugs with a pest control professional. The best way to get rid of bed bugs is to clean, disinfect, and remove places where bed bugs hide. However, because bed bugs can live for weeks or even months without food and water, pest control

professionals may recommend using a pesticide. Ask the professional to use the least toxic pesticide and make sure they follow instructions and warnings on the labels. You may need to leave the room for a day or more until it is safe to reenter. Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of mattresses or sofas, though small amounts may be applied to their seams by professional applicators. *Again, it is important that you first discuss these techniques with a pest control professional.*

### **How can I prevent bed bugs from entering my home?**

8. Washing clothing and bedding immediately after returning from a trip can prevent some infestations. Inspect all used beds, sofas, or upholstered chairs and bedding for signs of bed bugs before bringing them into your home. Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into your home. *Note: Furniture put out by someone else for garbage pick-up could be infested with bed bugs.*

**For specific concerns about bed bugs, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).**