

# FACT SHEET

# Bed Bugs

## What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, flat parasitic bugs that feed solely on the blood of humans and animals while they sleep. They are reddish-brown in color, wingless, and about the size of Lincoln's head on a penny. They can live several months without eating. Bed bugs hide in cracks and crevices in mattresses, beds, wooden furniture, floors, and walls during the day, and come out at night to feed. Bed bugs can be found anywhere. Their presence is not determined by the cleanliness of the living conditions.

## How are bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs are found worldwide. They are experts at hiding. Most people do not realize they are transporting stow-away bed bugs as they travel from place to place. Bed bugs are easily transported in luggage, clothing, bedding, and furniture. Bed bugs can infest trains, airplanes, cruise ships, and buses as well as hotels, dorms, homes, and apartment complexes.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Finding the remnants of the bed bugs' exoskeletons after molting
- Finding live bed bugs in the fold of

mattresses and sheets

- Observing rusty-colored blood spots due to their blood-filled fecal material that they excrete on the mattress or nearby furniture
- Smelling a sweet musty odor

## How can bed bugs be prevented?

The best way to prevent bed bugs is to regularly inspect for signs of an infestation and treat immediately if found. Be sure to inspect any secondhand furniture before bringing it into your home. While traveling, inspect any room where you'll be staying and inspect all luggage. Vacuum (paying special attention to areas surrounding beds) and change bed linens at least once a week.

## How are bed bugs treated?

Bed bug bites normally do not pose a medical threat. They do bite, which normally causes discomfort and itchiness. Some people are allergic to bed bug bites and can have a more serious reaction. Typically, bed bug bites are treated by trying to avoid itching them, applying an antiseptic cream, and taking an antihistamine. Bed bug infestations are commonly treated by insecticide spraying by a licensed pest control company. Bed bugs are not known to cause disease.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

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