

## Bedbugs

Bedbugs are tiny insects about one-quarter inch long. They like to hide in bedding, mattresses, walls and furniture during the day and come out at night. Like mosquitoes, bedbugs bite people and animals and survive on their blood. Unlike mosquitoes, bedbugs are not known to spread disease to people.

Bedbugs are cream colored to brown, but they turn reddish brown after they eat. People who are bitten by bedbugs may find itchy spots on their skin, which can lead to scratching. If the scratching breaks the skin, the sores can get infected. Some people may have a large skin reaction to the bites, while others in the same home may notice nothing at all.

### Signs and Symptoms

Bedbugs leave dark pink or red, itchy, sometimes swollen, bites on the skin. Bites can occur on any body area. Often the bites are clustered or in a straight row. Other signs include:

- Tiny bloodstains on sheets and mattresses.
- Dark marks where bedbugs have left droppings in places like bedding, floors, walls and furniture.
- A strange, sweet odor when there are large numbers of bedbugs.

### Where Bedbugs Are Found

Bedbugs may be found in shelters, apartment buildings, motels and even the best hotels - anywhere large numbers of people move in and out. They can come into your home on luggage, purses, furniture, clothing, pillows, boxes and other objects. Bedbugs like small dark spaces, so during the day they hide in the seams of bedding and mattresses and in crevices in floors, furniture and paper clutter. Bedbugs are not a cleanliness issue; they can live in the cleanest of environments.

### Getting Rid of the Bedbugs

Bedbugs can live for 10 months and they can go for weeks without feeding. Bedbugs can be very challenging to get rid of. To get rid of bedbugs:

- If you've found bedbugs in a room, it's best to leave it "as is." Do not remove anything from the room, but close it off completely if possible.
- Throw away mattresses and box springs that are infested (have lots of bedbugs). If you cannot throw the items out, enclose the mattress and box springs completely in a plastic mattress cover that traps the bugs.

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## Getting Rid of the Bedbugs, continued

- In the summertime, put small things that cannot go in the washing machine, like stuffed animals and pillows, in dark-colored plastic bags. Leave the bags outside in the hot sun for 2 or 3 days (Picture 1).
- Wash clothes and bedding in hot water and dry them with the hot cycle of the clothes dryer.
- Wash, vacuum or clean all furniture and bedding. Be sure to vacuum cracks in wood doors, woodwork and floors where bugs may hide. Throw away the vacuum cleaner bag after each use.
- Remove piles of wood and paper trash where bedbugs may hide.
- Use a bug spray or other insecticide in cracks in floors or bed frames where you think bugs could hide. Check with personnel at a garden or hardware store for the right spray to kill the bugs. Read and carefully follow directions for using any insecticide.
- If you cannot get rid of the bedbugs yourself, you can call an insect control company for treatment choices.
- If you have young children in the home, be sure to protect them from the chemicals.
- If you live in an apartment building, the units around you should also be examined and treated if necessary.
- When the bedbugs are gone, be sure to keep your home and bedding clean and free of clutter to keep the bugs from coming back.



**Picture 1** Put items that cannot be washed in a dark plastic bag and place in the hot sun.

## What to Do About Itching and Scratching

- Keep your child's fingernails cut short to stop him from scratching open the skin. Placing socks over the child's hands may help to keep him from scratching (Picture 2).
- Itching may continue for a while after the bedbugs are gone. If itching bothers your child, ask your doctor to prescribe a medicine to help stop itching.



**Picture 2** It may help to put socks on your child's hands to prevent scratching.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call the doctor if your child has any of these signs:

- An allergic reaction (trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, rash and/or swelling)
- Infection at the itching site: redness that does not go away but gets worse; yellow drainage and increased pain around the bug bite.
- Fever – temperature above 100° F under the arm.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse.

**For more information, please check the website [www.centralohiobedbugs.org](http://www.centralohiobedbugs.org).**