

Bedbugs

Bedbugs are tiny insects that bite people at night while sleeping and hide during the day. They do not fly but can move very fast. 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.

Bedbugs need to feed on human or animal blood to grow. Their size, shape and color vary depending on their age and when they last had a blood meal.

- Newborns (nymphs) can be the size of a pinhead and are clear to creamy-white in color.
- Adults are flat and oval-shaped like a balloon. They can grow to the size of an apple seed and be as thick as a credit card.
- Most bedbugs are light tan and turn reddish brown after eating.

Bedbugs usually eat every 5 to 10 days. However, adult bugs can live for 6 to 12 months without eating. Bedbugs are not known to spread disease to people.

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. Bedbugs are not a cleanliness issue; they can live in the cleanest places. An infestation starts when:

- Bedbugs hitch a ride into your home on luggage, purses, clothes, used mattresses, furniture, boxes or paper clutter without your knowledge.
- They hide in small, dark cracks and crevices during the day and come out at night.

Signs and symptoms

A bedbug bite can look like a mosquito bite or not show anything at all. The bite may have a red dot in the center of a raised, red and swollen area. It often does not itch right away. Bites usually occur where skin is not covered- the face, neck, arms, hands, legs and feet. They are usually clustered in a straight row.

To know if someone has a bedbug bite, it is important to look for the following clues of an infestation:

Continued on page 2

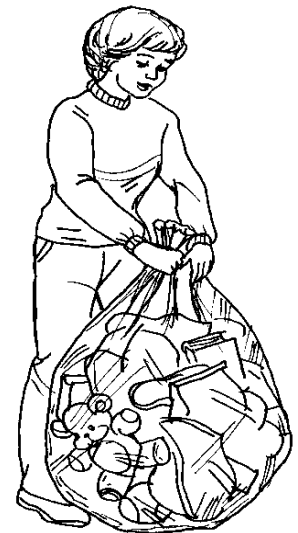
Signs and symptoms, continued

- Rusty, reddish bloodstains on sheets and mattresses, especially near seams and folds
- Dark spots about the size of a pinhead (like a marker would make) on bedding, floors, cracks and folds of furniture, edges of walls and wood moldings and in paper clutter. These markings are where bedbugs leave their droppings (feces).
- Tiny eggshells or pale yellow skins that have been shed by the bedbugs as they grow.
- Live bedbugs
- A strange, sweet odor when there are large numbers of bedbugs.

Getting rid of the bedbugs

Bedbugs can be very challenging to get rid of. There are no quick fixes. If you have found bedbugs in a room, do not ignore the problem or it will get worse.

- Only use a licensed pest control professional (exterminator) to treat your home. If renting, contact your landlord right away. Some landlords will pay for this service.
- Do not use do-it-yourself, over-the-counter (OTC) bug bombs, bug sprays, farm or garden insecticides, rubbing alcohol or other chemicals. They may be dangerous and will not work. They could cause the bedbugs to scatter and spread to new places.
- Remove clutter, piles of wood, and paper trash where bedbugs may hide. Get things off the floor. Anything that is thrown away should be put in plastic bags, sealed and placed in outdoor trash cans.
- Wash and dry clothing, bedding, and curtains on the hottest settings. After all is completely dry, run the dryer for at least 30 minutes more. Store items that do not need to be used in a plastic bag, sealed and marked “clean.”
- Vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture and cracks in the woodwork and floors where bugs may hide. Just before finishing, sprinkle $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of talcum powder or cornstarch on an area and vacuum. The powder will help suffocate the bedbugs that are in the bag or cup. After each use, empty the bag or cup into a plastic bag. Seal and place the sack in an outdoor trash can. You will need to vacuum the room before, during and after treatment.
- Place items that cannot be cleaned (toys, shoes, electronics and books) in a plastic bag and seal it. A licensed exterminator can recommend a product to put inside the bag to kill the bedbugs.



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

Continued on page 3

Getting rid of the bedbugs, continued

- Throw away mattresses, box springs and furniture that are infested (have lots of bedbugs). Wrap and seal them in plastic before putting outside.
- If you cannot throw away the bed, enclose the mattress and box springs in a zippered, plastic, bedbug-proof mattress cover (“encasement”) that traps the bugs. The encasement needs to stay on the bed for one year.
- Do not share things with others until the bed bugs are gone.
- If you live in an apartment building, nearby units 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.

Preventing bedbugs

- Always inspect things that are brought home, especially used items.
- Do not take home things that have been left on the street or in someone’s trash.
- When traveling, check for signs of bedbugs around the bed. Keep luggage off the floor.

What to do about itching and scratching

- Keep fingernails cut short to stop scratching open the skin. The sores could become infected. Placing socks on the hands may help to prevent scratching (Picture 2).
- If itching bothers your child, his or her doctor or a pharmacist may recommend a cream with hydrocortisone or an oral (by mouth) antihistamine. An antibacterial soap or cleanser may also be suggested to prevent infection.



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:

- Infection
 - redness and swelling at the bite site that does not go away but gets worse
 - yellow drainage
 - increased pain around the site
- Fever – temperature above 102° F under the arm
- An allergic reaction (trouble breathing, fast heartbeat, rash or swelling)

For more information and photos go to these sites:

- www.centralohiobedbugs.org
- www.epa.gov/bedbug