

# What to do about Bed Bugs

## What are Bed Bugs?

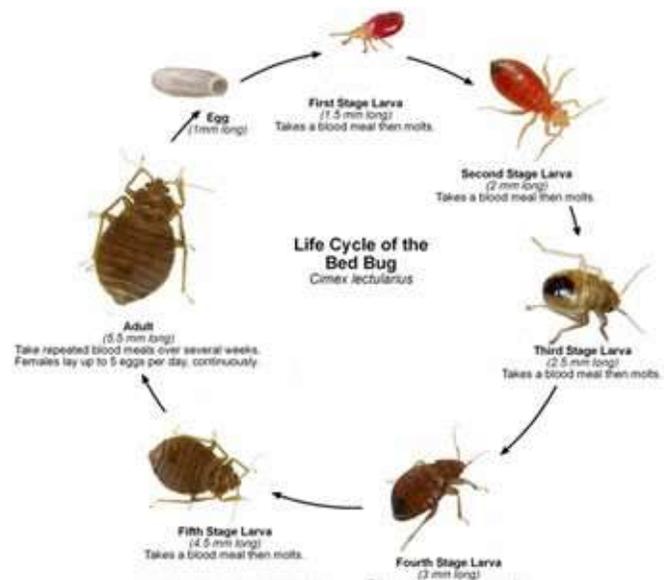
Bed bugs are 1/8th inch long, chestnut brown, wingless, and generally oval shaped. When they eat they can elongate and become dark red. They typically bite in a row rather than a single bite, but not everyone has a reaction. While bed bugs do not spread disease, they do cause mental anguish.



This is the size of an adult bed bug. Pictured to the right are all the stages in the life cycle of the bed bug after feeding and their eggs.

Usually found in or near beds, they hide during the day and become active at night when they feed. They can live months without a meal.

Bed bugs are not known to spread disease to people. However, the bites can cause itching and rashes which may become infected. Some people are allergic to the bites, which causes more severe symptoms.



## Where do bed bugs come from?

Bed bugs live with people. They do not come from the outdoors, like ticks do. They can live in hotels, shelters, homes, and furniture. Virtually all small cracks and crevices can act as a home for bed bugs. Bed bugs do not live on humans, rather they feed during the night and go back to their hiding spot after they are done.

## How can they get into my house?

Visiting people can bring them in or they can travel through the walls from adjacent apartments. They can hitch hike on clothing and be brought to a new location. Bringing home used furniture, especially mattresses, are often the cause of the introduction. Avoiding used furniture, especially those left out for trash pickup, is advised.

## How do I know if I have them?

People usually notice once they start getting bitten. Bed bugs bite in rows, rather than randomly, like mosquitos. You might see the bugs in your bed along the seams of the mattress, the underside of the mattress, or the underside of the box spring. Blood stains or dark spots of insect waste may be seen on sheets, base boards, around outlet covers, and behind picture frames. Taking a cut up credit card and running it through crevices could push them out into the open.

## How do I get rid of them?

Bed bugs are tough and it may be difficult to get rid of them. But there are some things you can do to help remove them from your home:

- Remove trash and clean up clutter in your home where they can hide.
- Seal cracks and crevices.
- A thick layer of petroleum jelly can be put around the legs of bed.
- Interceptors can be put under the legs of beds and furniture.
- Move your bed away from walls.
- Wash all your sheets, blankets, pillows and stuffed animals in the hot wash cycle (140°F). Dry them in the hot cycle. Keep them off the bed until you enclose the mattress in a cover.
- Clean and vacuum all furniture, especially in the cracks.
- Vacuum floors and baseboards, especially in the cracks.
- After vacuuming anything, put the vacuum bag in a tightly tied plastic trash bag and put it in a garbage can outside. For bag less vacuums, empty the bin outside into a plastic trash bag.
- Many people decide to throw out their mattress although this is not necessary. If you decide to throw it out, use a black marker and write BED BUGS on it.
- Using a good quality mattress cover will lock the bed bugs inside until they die. Beware, not all mattress covers will keep bed bugs in. Research carefully before purchasing, as you will get what you pay for. Keep the mattress cover on for a whole year otherwise the bed bugs can come back.
- Vacuuming or steaming the mattress may help if you only have a minor infestation.
- Place smaller articles in a black plastic bag out in the hot sun for several days if it is summer. The heat will kill the bed bugs.
- Bed bugs have been known to come back after being frozen.
- **Do not apply pesticides!** House hold pesticides and bug sprays are not affective against bed bugs and can cause them to spread. Poisonings are very common when people apply pesticides on their own, especially among children. **Only a licensed pest control technician should apply pesticides.**

## Extermination

The most successful form of extermination is Integrated Pest Management. This method looks at the safest and most effective methods to get rid of the bed bugs. Before using chemicals, the pest control operator uses preventative methods, exclusion and non-chemical control methods. Bed bugs in particular are resistant to most available pesticides. Heat/steam, silica dust, and diatomaceous earth are commonly used instead of pesticides, as they are most effective.

A reputable pest control operator will be a licensed pest control applicator, they will inspect the property before giving you a quote, and they will be able to give you references for past bed bug extermination. They should also talk to you about their plan. Typically, at least three rounds of application are needed to control an infestation because of the life cycle of bed bugs.

### For more information or questions:

Allentown Health Bureau  
435 Hamilton St. 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Allentown, PA, 18101  
610-437-7759