



What Are Bedbugs?

Bedbugs are reddish-brown insects with flat, oval bodies.

They are approximately 4–7mm or ¼” long. They swell and turn dark brown after feeding on blood. The eggs are white and about 1mm long.

Like mosquitoes, they bite and feed on the blood of mammals. They prefer humans but will feed on mice, rats, and other animals.

They come out to feed only at night or in the dark. They bite while people sleep, disrupting their rest.

During the day, bedbugs hide in narrow spaces such as the seams of mattresses, cracks in walls, floors and ceilings, behind wallpaper, under rugs, inside baseboards or electrical boxes.

Although many people are not affected by them, bedbug bites can cause itching, swelling, and inflammation.

Bedbugs can spread by hiding in the luggage of travelers or in moving trucks. They can hide in used furniture, especially older pieces that have small cracks.

In a building, they can spread from room to room or apartment to apartment. They are more often found in densely populated neighborhoods.

Bedbugs are not known carriers or transmitters of diseases to humans. They cannot fly or leap from one person to another.

MORE ASSISTANCE

If your landlord refuses to provide extermination assistance, call the **Housing Inspection Division** at (617) 635-5322 or the **Boston Public Health Commission** at (617) 534-2865.

To report a problem with bedbugs anonymously, contact the **City’s 24 hour tip line** at (617) 961-3297.



Working Together, Building Community

617-787-3874
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Information About Bedbugs



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Symptoms of Bedbug Bites

People often suspect they have bedbugs when they have bites that they cannot explain.

Bedbugs bite only exposed skin, so bites are mostly likely found on the arms, the neck, the shoulders and the stomach. The bites tend to be in orderly rows and sometimes follow the outline of a person's sleeping clothes.

Bedbug bites can result in itchiness, swelling and inflammations that can lead to irritation or infection if you scratch them.

Signs of Infestation

There may be small bloodstains on the mattress or the bedclothes. Bedbugs may also hide in the seams and folds of the mattress, in the bedclothes, or in the crevices of the bedframe. Check the underside of the mattress for bedbugs as well.

Bedbugs can hide in any narrow space, including cracks in walls, floor or ceiling, in the crevices of dressers or other furniture, behind wallpaper, under rugs, inside baseboards or electrical boxes. They can also hide in picture frames, CD cases, and in books. Their hiding places may be marked by small black or brown spots of dried feces. In a serious infestation, a sickly-sweet odor can sometimes be detected.

Treating Bedbug Bites

Do not scratch the bites. Wash them with soap to reduce the risk of infection. Apply an ice pack frequently to reduce swelling. Consult your health provider if the bite becomes infected.



Help From Your Landlord

Confirm that the insects you find are bedbugs (*Cimex Lectularius*). The Harvard School of Public Health can help with lab tests:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/>

Ask your landlord to hire a qualified exterminator to inspect and treat your home. Prepare for inspection by cleaning your home, including closets, and removing clutter. Push furniture to the center of the room, away from walls. Empty out dressers. Pack up as much as you can in plastic bags. At least two pesticide applications, two weeks apart, are needed to break the bedbugs' reproductive cycle.

Based on the inspection, the exterminator will determine if your furniture can be treated or should be replaced. Discarded furniture should be sealed or else broken up so that no one is tempted to take it home.

The exterminator will implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan, which describes the extent of the infestation and the steps to control and monitor it. For example, treating adjacent apartment units might be recommended, depending on the level of infestation and condition of the building. The IPM should be shared with both landlord and residents of the affected units.

Repair cracks in walls and ceilings. Seal any gaps where water and heating pipes come through the walls or floors. Fill gaps in wooden floors

with wood-filler. Remove wall-to-wall carpeting.

Pesticides can be dangerous if they are not properly used or managed.

What Tenants Can Do

Protect mattresses with plastic mattress covers designed to contain dust mites. They will contain bedbugs, too.

Wash bedclothes, pillows, and clothing in hot water and dry them in commercial laundry dryers (the high heat will kill bedbug eggs). Keep clean laundry in sealed plastic bags to keep out bedbugs.

Use a steam-cleaner in places where using pesticide is difficult or inappropriate, such as closet corners or a baby's crib. The heat from the steam-cleaner can kill bedbugs.

Before moving furniture or luggage into your home, inspect them carefully. Avoid taking in furniture if you do not know where it has come from, especially if it has many cracks.

Clean carpets and vacuum floors frequently and discard vacuum cleaner bags immediately. Eliminate clutter in your home to reduce the narrow hiding spaces that bedbugs prefer.

A Good Exterminator Will...

1. Wait to proceed with treatment until it is clear that the problem is bedbugs, and not an infestation with similar symptoms.
2. Provide a detailed list of preparations that the tenant is responsible for before extermination, and only proceed with treatment upon completion of these steps.
3. Use an extermination plan that requires multiple treatments, as 68% of infestations require three or more treatments for successful results.
4. Recognize that there may be items in the infested unit that cannot be treated effectively and must be thrown out.
5. Be thorough in their extermination plan, making sure to treat all the nooks and crevices throughout the house where bedbugs may hide.



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