

Facts & DETAILS

Bed Bugs

Page 1

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are parasitic insects that feed on human blood. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease.

How common are bed bugs?

Bed bugs remain common insects in most parts of the world. Traditionally, bed bugs were seen as a problem in developing countries, but they have recently been spreading rapidly in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

What are the signs and symptoms of bed bugs?

Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but later turn into large, itchy skin welts. Bed bugs typically bite any exposed areas of skin, including the face, neck, hands, and arms. Small, flat or raised bumps on the skin (often several bites in a row) are the most common signs of bed bug bites.

How do people become infested?

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes unknowingly in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments and hotel rooms through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

What do bed bugs look like?

Bed bugs are reddish brown, oval, flat, and about the size of an apple seed. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. During the day, bed bugs hide in the cracks and crevices of beds, box springs, headboards, and bed frames. They can also be found under peeling paint and loose wallpaper, under carpeting near baseboards, in upholstered furniture seams, and under light switch plates and electrical outlets.

Who is at risk for bed bugs?

Anyone can get bed bugs. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home has nothing to do with getting bed bugs. However, clutter in the home can make it harder to find and treat bed bugs before an infestation happens.

How are bed bugs treated?

Most bed bug bites do not require medical treatment unless there is an allergic reaction to the bites or a secondary skin infection develops from scratching the bitten areas. The redness and itch caused by the bites usually goes away within 1-2 weeks. A skin cream containing hydrocortisone or an oral antihistamine may help speed up recovery.

Bed bugs can be difficult to get rid of in a home because they are hard to find and can live for months without eating. The best way to remove bed bugs is to hire a professional exterminator. An exterminator may use a combination of pesticides and nonchemical treatments. Most severe infestations require multiple treatments to kill all bed bugs. Clothing, bedding, and other items can be washed in hot water and dried on the highest dryer setting for at least 30 minutes to kill bed bugs. Mattress covers designed to keep bed bugs out should be used on mattresses and box springs.

How can you prevent bed bugs?

The following steps can help you avoid bed bug infestations:

- Wash clothing and inspect luggage immediately after returning from a trip.
- Inspect all used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into the home.
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into the home.
- Vacuum regularly and minimize clutter.
- If you visit an area with a known bed bug infestation, check your clothing, shoes, and personal items (e.g., coats, bags) for bugs before entering your own home.

For More Information:
Sedgwick County Division of Health
Epidemiology Program
1900 E. 9th St.
Wichita, KS 67214
(316) 660-7300
www.sedgwickcounty.org



Sedgwick County...
working for you

Sedgwick County Corporate Communications Office

316-660-9370 525 N. Main Suite 315 Wichita KS 67203 www.sedgwickcounty.org