



# Bed Bug Information & Fact Sheet

Compiled by the Monmouth County Health Department

## Where did they come from?

Scientists believe that bed bugs have followed us from the cave to the tent to the house. In fact, bed bugs have been around for centuries. Documentation from the 17th century spoke about infestations of bed bugs

In the United States, bed bugs were very common until about World War II. Many feel that a decrease in infestations occurred with the introduction of such pesticides as DDT. But DDT was banned in 1972, because of its negative impact on our environment

It was not until the last decade that reported cases gave an indication of a possible rise in bed bug infestations. Today there is a new generation of professionals who have never had to deal with a bed bug infestation before

No one knows why there is a continuing rise in bed bug infestations, but there are several theories:

- Increased international travel especially to exotic places. Bed bugs travel with people, sometimes in luggage
- The DDT ban of 1972
- Unfamiliarity with the pest

## So what is a bed bug?

Simply put, a bed bug is a small insect that feeds on the blood of mammals and sometimes birds. They are straw colored to reddish brown, wingless insects with an oval shaped body. Adults are about  $\frac{1}{4}$  " long and flat, which is why they can fit into narrow crevices



Bed bugs are attracted to carbon dioxide and body heat but **not** to odors. Bed bugs are opportunistic. Bed bugs have been found from the finest hotels to the most

modest accommodations. Bed bugs do not recognize "clean" or "dirty", and their presence is not a reflection on the persons or places where they live.

They are prolific breeders. They are able to "repopulate" and re-infest a room in as little as 3 months. They are easy to see with the naked eye, but difficult to find when they are hiding

Bed bugs feed through two hollow tubes that pierce the skin, similar to a mosquito. But an irritation or bite experience in bed may not **necessarily** be due to bedbugs

A bed bug's lifespan is 10 months to a year. Because they live indoors, bed bugs can breed all year long. During her lifespan, depending upon temperature and food, the bed bug may lay 200-400 eggs which will hatch in about 10 days



Immature bedbug "casting" next to a common penny

Young reach adulthood in 5-8 weeks. Bed bugs will shed their skins five times before reaching adulthood. Young bugs must take a blood meal in order to shed their skins and grow

Bed bugs *prefer* to feed on humans. Pets such as dogs and cats are **not** a major host. Bed bugs feed for about 5-10 minutes, then crawl to a secluded area where they will digest their meal for several days. But most importantly, **Bed bug bites are not known to spread disease!**

Because individuals reactions to bites vary, people in the household may have different opinions about how "Bad" the infestation is, or whether there is an infestation at all. But bed bugs are a nuisance and do cause stress and sleeplessness



Because bed bugs are active at night, early stages of an infestation may not be recognized immediately. You may see small bloodstains from crushed bugs, dark spots from bedbug droppings, welts or marks on the body, or the bugs themselves

### Where should I look for them?

Bugs often hide in or near beds or bedroom furniture, in the tufts, seams and folds of the mattress. In more severe infestations, bugs may spread to the cracks & crevices in bed frames behind headboards, inside nightstands, behind baseboards, casings/moldings, pictures, loosened wallpaper etc.



In severe infestations bugs may be found in other areas of the home. Bugs may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, clothing and other clutter near the sleeping area

### What should I do about them?

**THE TENANT(S) OR AFFECTED PERSON(S) ARE THE ONES WHO MUST PERFORM THE BULK OF THE WORK REQUIRED TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS A BED BUG PROBLEM.** Elimination requires cooperation between the homeowner or owner of the building, the occupants and a licensed pest control operator. **Spraying pesticides alone will absolutely NOT solve the problem.**

Treatment and removal of infested furniture and mattresses may be necessary. Wash all bedding, draperies and clothing in hot water. Dry in a hot drier. Bed bugs will die at temperatures of over 120 degrees. Check clothing in stored areas for bugs.

Vacuum carpets and furniture. Vacuum the floor/wall junctions of the rooms to remove potential debris and material which would prevent the pesticide from reaching into the voids. Frequent vacuuming removes numbers of bugs, Cleaning objects removes eggs which are glued in crevices

Wipe away or vacuum all dust from the bed frame, nearby furniture, floors and carpets. Seal the vacuum bag in plastic and dispose in an outside dumpster or garbage can. Vacuum every day or two until the bugs are gone. But remember, Bed bugs can be distributed to other sites by the equipment used to remove them.

When possible, the vacuum should be bagged and used only for the purpose of removing bugs

Find, then clean areas where bed bugs hide. Remove clutter from bedrooms and any other furniture that people may sleep or nap on. Place the clutter into a garbage bag, seal it tightly. If you need to save it, make sure it stays sealed for a year

The mattress may need to be replaced. Alternatively, encase it in a “dust mite mattress cover” (allergy supplies) until the bed bugs are eradicated. Bed bugs can live for 2 months to a year without a food supply

Do NOT have the mattress treated with residual insecticides.

The bugs may still be present in the Box Spring. The box spring should be thoroughly inspected and either treated, bagged or replaced as necessary



Be very cautious about using pesticides! MCHD recommends homeowners hire a Pest Control Operator licensed by NJDEP

### After Treatment

After treatment, make your bed an “Island”. Move the bed away from the wall. Don’t let the linens, bed skirt or blanket touch the floor. This will make it harder for the bed bugs to crawl into the bed. Bed bugs can not fly or jump. Complete control is often difficult to achieve with the first treatment

Some problems can be prevented by washing clothing and bedding immediately after returning from a trip. Inspect all used furniture & bedding before you bring it into your home

**And Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture into your home**

For additional information contact the



**Monmouth County  
Health Department  
3435 Hwy # 9  
Freehold NJ 07728  
(732) 431-7456**