

# What Are Bed Bugs?

**Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood.** Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown, wingless and about the size of an apple seed. Their flat bodies allow them to move in and out of very narrow spaces, such as behind baseboards, around screws in furniture and, as their name suggests, in the seams and crevices of mattresses and other furniture. While not life-threatening, bed bug infestations can negatively affect a person's quality of life.

Bed bugs have been found in every major Ohio city, and reports to local health departments have increased recently. The insects frequently are found in hotels, dormitories and apartments – places where the occupants change frequently - but can be spread to other locations, such as cars and homes, quite easily. Bed bugs hitch rides on clothing, luggage, bedding and furniture, so care is necessary to avoid spreading infestations.

Newly hatched bed bugs resemble adults but are white or yellowish in color. Their eggs are white, about the size of a pinhead and usually are found in crevices in clusters of 10-50 eggs. Under the right conditions, bed bugs can grow to adults in as little as a month and produce three or more generations per year. Immature bed bugs can survive months without feeding, and the adults can go for more than a year without food.



## How do I know if I have bed bugs?

Bed bugs do not have nests and are great at hiding. Unless an infestation is severe, you may not see bugs in the open. You'll have to examine common hiding places for tell-tale signs, such as dark spots and stains. Here are the most likely places to find them:

- **In pillowcases, sheets,** box springs and the seams and tufts of mattresses;
- **Behind your bed's headboard,** the baseboards, anything stored under the bed and furniture near the bed, such as your nightstands;
- **Inside window and door casings,** pictures, moldings, loose wallpaper, cracks in the plaster and clutter;
- **In couches and chairs** in which you spend a lot of time;
- **Inside electrical outlets and light switches,** phones, clocks, smoke detectors and toys; and
- **Around pets** and their usual resting spots.

**Continued...**

## What Are Bed Bugs? (continued)

### How Bad Is a Bed Bug's Bite?

Bed bugs usually bite people at night while they are sleeping, and feed on any skin that is exposed. Their bites are characterized by rows of welts and are initially painless. Bed bug bites may cause itchy red welts or localized swelling within a day or so of the bite. Severe itching could last for several hours to days and scratching can cause the welts to become infected.



Your doctor may prescribe antihistamines and corticosteroids to reduce allergic reactions to bed bug bites, and antiseptic or antibiotic ointments to prevent infection. Bed bugs are not known to transmit diseases to humans.

### How Can I Keep Bed Bugs Out of My Home?

Your best defense against bed bugs is to prevent them from coming into your home in the first place.

- **Check your shoes** and clothing before you come into your home, especially if you have been using public transportation or have been to a location where many different people congregate or pass through (such as a doctor's office or meal site).
- **If you have care providers** coming into your home, ask them how they have been trained to limit the spread of bed bugs and how they will prevent bringing bed bugs into your home.
- **Inspect used furniture** for bed bugs before bringing it into your home.
- **Never bring discarded** bed frames, mattresses, box springs or furniture into your home.
- **When traveling**, inspect the bed and furniture where you are staying. Keep suitcases off the floor and bed, and inspect them before you leave.
- **Wash all clothing** immediately after returning from a trip and inspect your luggage for signs of bed bugs.