

## BED BUGS

### Bed Bug Information

Bed bugs are small, wingless, red-brownish, flattened insects that feed solely on the blood of animals. The common bed bug, *Cimex lectularius*, is the species most adapted to living with humans.

The common bed bug is found worldwide. Infestations are common in the developing world, occurring in settings of unsanitary living conditions and severe crowding. In recent years, bed bugs have also made a comeback in the U.S. They are increasingly being encountered in homes, apartments, hotels, motels, dormitories, shelters and modes of transport.

### Where do Bed Bugs Hide?

Bed bugs are active only at night, usually just before dawn. During the day they hide in cracks and crevices in walls, floors, beds and furniture. Common bed bugs become established in structures when they hitch a ride in boxes, baggage, furniture, bedding, laundry, and in and on clothing worn by people coming from infested sites. The most common place to find them is the bed. Bed bugs often hide within seams, tufts, and crevices of the mattress, box spring, bed frame and headboard.

### When do Bed Bugs Bite?

Bed bugs usually bite people at night while they are sleeping. They feed by piercing the skin with an elongated beak through which they withdraw blood. Engorgement takes about three to 10 minutes, yet the person seldom knows they are being bitten.

### What are the Symptoms of Bed Bugs Bites?

Symptoms can vary with the individual. Some people develop an itchy welt or localized swelling, while others have little or no reaction. Unlike fleabites that occur mainly around the ankles, bed bugs feed on any bare skin exposed while sleeping (face, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, etc.). The welts and itching are often attributed to other causes such as mosquitoes. For these reasons, infestations may go a long time unnoticed, and can become quite large before being detected. Bed bugs are not usually considered to be disease carriers.

## What is a Bat Bed Bug?

A second common source for bed bug infestation occurs in homes where bats, swallows, chimney swifts, pigeons, or other wild hosts have been roosting. Although similar in appearance, these bed bug species that normally feed on bats and birds can be differentiated from the Common Bed Bug that prefer humans.

The bat bug has long hairs on its body. Their host range is confused by the fact that the insect family Cimicidae, of which the common bed bug is a member, has several closely related species with similar habits and appearance. While these insects prefer other hosts, they can, when stressed, feed on humans. The Eastern bat bed bug comes into homes in the spring with colonies of bats.

## How Can I Get Rid of Bed Bugs?

Insecticide dust and sprays are important for bed bug elimination. Pest control professionals treat using a variety of low-odor sprays, dusts, and aerosols. (Baits designed to control ants and cockroaches are ineffective).

Be sure to read and follow all label directions when using any pesticide product, and if treating a mattress be sure to remove all sheets, blankets, pillows, etc. before treating the mattress. Wash these items in hot water and dry in a dryer as part of the control process. Application entails treating all cracks and crevices where the bugs are discovered, or tend to hide.

Heating to 97° to 99°F will kill most bed bugs, as will temperatures below 48°F.

A thorough vacuuming of cracks, crevices and other areas where bed bugs hide is an essential part of an integrated pest management program targeting this particular pest. Discard vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag when finished.

In addition, if it is determined that they are bat bugs, eliminate their bat hosts from the building and seal all openings so that bats cannot enter.

Home owners can try these removal treatments specific for bed bugs, but may find it difficult to eliminate them on their own, since treatment usually requires repeating. Most home owners find it easier to hire a professional to rid their home of this resilient pest.

**\*\* IMPORTANT NOTICE TO FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS \*\***

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE YOU ALLOWED TO ATTEMPT TO RID YOUR ESTABLISHMENT OF BUGS, PESTS, OR RODENTS BY YOUR OWN MEANS. PER THE PUBLIC HEALTH CODE, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL LICENSED PEST CONTROL COMPANY FOR THIS TASK. IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE OR CLARIFICATION ON THIS RULE, PLEASE CONTACT US VIA THE INFORMATION BELOW.**

Contact Us

To receive more information, or assistance with common bed bug removal advice, call or visit us at:

Clinton County Health Department  
Environmental Unit  
135 Margaret Street  
Plattsburgh, NY 12901  
Tel: (518) 565-4870