

Bed Bug Tip Sheet Frequently Asked Questions

Bed bugs are small insects that are found in people's homes. They feed by sucking blood from people, their preferred food source. It is thought that over the centuries they have adapted to feed on people because it is easier to get a blood meal from a person than from an animal or bird where they have to crawl through fur or feathers. Bed bugs belong to the genus Cimex. Species of Cimex that feed on bats and birds have been found in Alberta.

Where did bed bugs come from?

- Bed bug infestations have increased world wide over the last few years. Suggested reasons for the increase in bed bug infestations include:
 - increased world travel,
 - changes in pesticide use,
 - lack of knowledge about how to identify bed bugs
 - lack of knowledge about how to prevent and control infestations.
 - resistance to available chemical control measures.

What do bed bugs look like?

- Bed bug eggs are 1mm long and pearly white in color. Female bed bugs glue their eggs to surfaces close to a food source (i.e. close to where people sleep such as bed frames, headboards, night stands etc.).
- Newly hatched bed bugs are semi-transparent to light tan in colour and the size of a pin head. They turn a dark reddish brown when they feed.
- Bed bugs go through 5 life stages to become adults over approximately 37 days.
- They need to feed at least once at each stage before they can shed their skins to reach the next stage. Shed skins or exoskeletons are a light tan in colour.
- Adults are about the size of an apple seed and the colour varies from a light tan to a dark reddish brown/black depending on whether they have fed recently.

Where do bed bugs live?

- Bed bugs prefer dark cool hiding places as close as possible to a food source i.e. to the sleeping place of people.
- Bed bugs can be found on and around:
 - Mattresses, box springs, headboards and bed frames
 - dressers
 - picture frames
 - couches
 - baseboards
 - and any other convenient hiding place

How fast do bed bugs multiply?

- After mating, a female bed bug can lay 5-20 eggs over a 10 day period and 200 – 500 over her life time..
- Eggs usually hatch into a miniature bed bug (nymph) within 7-10 days.
- A female bed bug will stop laying eggs if unable to obtain a blood meal.

How do bed bugs move?

- Bed bugs do not fly, jump or chew holes into things.

- Bed bugs move by crawling. They will move from suite to suite in a multifamily building by moving into and out of wall cavities between suites.
- Bed bugs hitchhike. They hide on furniture, clothing, purses, luggage, mattresses etc. and are transported to new locations by unsuspecting people.

Are there health concerns with bed bugs?

- Bed bugs do not transmit any communicable human diseases as far as is known.
- Only about 45% of people react to bed bug bites. Elderly, pregnant and immunocompromised people are less likely to react.
- The bites can become itchy and can cause secondary infections if scratched.

What types of bed bug treatments are available?

- Integrated pest management (IPM) practices should be used if a bed bug infestation has been confirmed or is suspected.

What are integrated pest management practices?

- The use of chemical and physical control measures to get rid of bed bugs and their eggs.
- The occupant(s), the landlord and the pest control professional must all work together to successfully get rid of bed bugs and their eggs.
- Physical control measures can be used by the occupant and include cleaning, vacuuming and doing laundry on a daily and/or weekly basis.
De-cluttering and cleaning your home are essential to getting rid of a bed bug infestation
- Using glue paper or sticky straps may allow you to monitor an increase or decrease in bed bug activity.
- Making your bed an island will help to prevent bed bugs from biting you when you sleep.
 - Move your bed at least 30 centimetres away from the wall.
 - Place interceptors (purchased or home made) under bed legs to prevent bed bugs crawling from the floor into your bed. *Bed bugs don't like climbing on smooth, shiny or sticky surfaces.*
 - Home made interceptors may be made by using :
 - double-sided sticky tape wrapped around the bed legs.
 - petroleum jelly applied as a coating on the bed legs.
 - smooth sided containers with vegetable oil or talcum powder in the bottom placed under the bed legs.
 - Remove bed skirts and do not allow your bed covers to touch the floor.
 - Do not put coats, clothing, purses etc. on the bed.
- Chemical control measures should only be applied by a certified pest control professional after an inspection confirms the presence of bed bugs.
- Heat treatment is a non-chemical control measure that can be applied by a certified pest control professional. It can be successful under the right conditions but is not a substitute method for a cluttered living space.

Can I donate furniture and other items if I have bed bugs?

- Do not donate items or give items to friends/family if you have, or suspect you have, a bed bug infestation.
- Destroy items so that they cannot be used and place in the garbage.

- Items that cannot be destroyed can be labelled as “bed bug infested” prior to disposal.
- Refer to “[Edmonton’s Guide to Preventing & Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely: A Guide for Property Owners, Operators, Managers & Tenants](#)” which can be found at www.eaa.ab.ca.
- This tip sheet and other information may be found at www.albertahealthservices.ca and then search for bed bugs and for bedbugs.