

Bed Bugs

A Brief History

Bed bugs have been with us dating back to prehistoric times. They evolved as parasites on bats, and switched hosts to feed on our cave-dwelling ancestors. When humans developed an agrarian society, bed bugs moved with us from cave to hut, to the house, to the hotel, to medical facility.



What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are reddish-brown, flattened, oval, and wingless, with microscopic hairs that help to give them a banded look. Adults grow to be approximately 3/8 of an inch in length and cannot move quick enough to escape human observation. Can you see it in the picture?



Why are Bed Bugs so prevalent now?

It is believed that the resurgence of bedbugs is caused by the banning of pesticides, such as DDT. Bed bugs have become resistant to common pesticides, so spraying bug spray is not going to keep them away. It is also believed that the resurgence of bed bugs is caused by the ease of international travel. Bed bugs were never eradicated from other countries, and now they can hop on a flight with you, travel in the car with you, stay in a hotel with you, and then come back home with you.

Where are they found?

Bed bugs are not only a problem in hotels, they are also found in warehouses, fire stations, airports, and movie theaters. Because bed bugs feed on blood, the cleanliness of a home doesn't have anything to do with bedbug infestations. Recent outbreaks have been found at The Empire State Building, College campuses across California, Phoenix Fire Stations, Homeless shelters, United Nations buildings, and Hospitals.



When and how do they feed?



Bed bugs harbor during the day in clusters and generally feed at night. They are attracted by warmth and carbon dioxide. Bed bugs feed on the blood of humans, birds and mice. They pierce the skin with two tubes: one tube injects saliva (which contain anticoagulants and anesthetics), while the other withdraws blood. Salivary secretions can cause a person's skin to itch and become swollen.



Feeding lasts for approximately 5 to 15 minutes. Bed bugs can last up to one year without feeding (in cold temperatures), but generally eat every five to 10 days. They can survive for up to five days at 14 °F and will die within 7 minutes of 115 °F heat.

They double their weight with every blood meal but 1/2 of the blood meal is lost through the anus in the first 5 hours after feeding. They travel five to 20 feet (each way) to feed.



Engorged female – rounded abdomen



Adult male – pointed abdomen



For more information visit esd.maricopa.gov or call (602) 506-6616



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Why worry about Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are not a vector proven to carry infectious agents or cause disease. However, they are considered a nuisance due to the following:

- Discomfort from bites, skin rashes and irritations (heavy infestations have been known to cause anemia in the very young and elderly). Most bite reactions occur immediately, but may take 14 days. Bites can be found anywhere, especially exposed skin
 - Possible disfigurement from a high number of bites
 - Emotional distress
 - Infection of bite areas is possible
 - Possible allergic reactions
- Economic cost of eradicating in your household or business establishment
- Anxiety and stress can lead to sleeplessness. Sleep disturbance results in fatigue and mental health complications
- Delusory parasitosis may be incited
- Pesticide poisoning



Bed bugs go from egg to adult in five weeks to four months. Adults live about 10 months. Females lay between one and five eggs per day, with an incubation period of 10 days in warm weather. What does this mean? Consider this:



*40 bed bugs are in a 70°F room on May 2.
By Nov 2 there are 5,905!*



How do they get into our homes or facilities?

Bed bugs often spread by "hitching rides" on people's clothing or luggage. Homes become infested through donated item (furniture, clothes, etc.) that are brought in. Inspect all secondhand furniture, linens, and clothing. They move around and may contaminate multiple rooms in a home or even multiple units in apartment buildings. They may also nest near animals that have nested within a building, such as bats, birds, or rodents.



How NOT to get Bed Bugs:

- Do not collect used furniture, mattresses or box springs
- If renting furniture, inspect it carefully
- When travelling check all motel/hotel rooms before unpacking or sleeping
- Try to avoid sitting on furniture that you think may be infested
- De-clutter
- Know next door



Ridding your home of Bed Bugs

If you have an infestation, completely eradicating bed bugs can be difficult and you may need to consult with a professional pest control/pest elimination company. Some suggestions that may help include:

- Dismantling bed frames and furniture
- Filling/sealing in cracks and crevices
- Encasing mattress and pillows
- Placing items in sealed plastic bag. It is recommended that you write on the bag "Bed Bug Infested" so that others don't use what you discard
- Wash linens in hot water (140°F) and dry with high heat (at least 20 minutes)



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