

Bed Bug Facts

The common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) has long been a pest – feeding on blood, causing itchy bites and generally irritating their human hosts. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) all consider bed bugs a public health pest. However, unlike most public health pests, bed bugs are not known to transmit or spread disease.

Experts believe the recent increase in bed bugs in the United States may be due to more travel, lack of knowledge about preventing infestations, increased resistance of bed bugs to pesticides, and ineffective pest control practices.

There are many bugs that look like bed bugs so an accurate identification is a critical first step to avoid costly treatment for the wrong bug.

Signs of Bed Bugs

An accurate way to identify a possible infestation is to look for physical signs of bed bugs. When cleaning, changing bedding, or staying away from home, look for:

- Rusty or reddish stains on bed sheets or mattresses caused by bed bugs being crushed.
- Dark spots (about this size: •), which are bed bug excrement and may bleed on the fabric like a marker would.
- Eggs and eggshells, which are tiny (about 1mm) and pale yellow skins that nymphs shed as they grow larger.
- Live bed bugs.

Bed bugs live in and around where humans live and are not always found in beds. Bed bugs crawl and climb, but cannot jump.

Bed bug infestations are not signs of poor sanitation or cleanliness as they don't feed on anything but blood.

Where Bed Bugs Hide

When not feeding, bed bugs hide in a variety of places. Around the bed, they can be found near the piping, seams and tags of the mattress and box spring, and in cracks on the bed frame and headboard.

If the room is heavily infested, you may find bed bugs:

- In the seams of chairs and couches, between cushions, in the folds of curtains.
- In drawer joints.
- In electrical receptacles and appliances.
- Under loose wall paper and wall hangings.
- At the junction where the wall and the ceiling meet.

Since bed bugs are only about the width of a credit card, they can squeeze into really small hiding spots. If a crack will hold a credit card, it could hide a bed bug.

Protecting Your Home from Bed Bugs

- Bed bugs are great hitchhikers. They can move from an infested site to a new home by traveling on furniture, bedding, luggage, boxes, and clothing.
- Check secondhand furniture for any signs of bed bug infestation before bringing it home.
- Use a protective cover to encase mattresses and box springs to eliminate possible hiding spots.
- Reduce clutter in your home to reduce hiding places for bed bugs.

- Vacuum frequently to remove any successful hitchhikers.
- Be vigilant when using shared laundry facilities. Transport items to be washed in plastic bags (if you have an active infestation use a new bag to bring clothes home). Remove from dryer directly into the new bag and fold at home. (A dryer on high heat can kill bedbugs).
- If you live in a multi-family home (like an apartment building or townhouse), try to isolate your unit by installing door sweeps on the bottom of doors to discourage movement into hallways. Seal cracks and crevices around baseboards, light sockets, etc., to discourage movement through walls.

Protecting Yourself from Bed Bugs in Public Places

- Reduce clutter. Clutter serves as an ideal habitat. By reducing clutter, you provide fewer places for the bed bugs to hide and fewer opportunities for them to hitchhike to your home.
- Keep your belongings stowed separately from those of other people. If there is a known problem, consider storing your belongings in a plastic bin.
- Be vigilant in areas where bed bugs are most likely to be found, which include break rooms, storage areas, offices or lounges with upholstered furniture, or areas where people may rest.
- Discourage panic and the stigma associated with bed bugs. These are counterproductive and can make treatment more difficult.
- Vacuum daily to pick up any stray bugs before they settle in.

If a Bed Bug is Found at Home

- Obtain a confirmed identity of the bug in question.
- Inform the School Nurse or administrator so efforts can be made at school to prevent a possible infestation.
- Only treat if a true infestation is found with breeding bed bugs. Remember, a single bed bug is not an infestation.
- Hire a pest professional that uses integrated pest management techniques.

How Bed Bugs are Handled in Monongalia County Schools

- When a suspected bedbug is found on a student or in a student's belongings, the bug is preserved and identified by Pest Management for a positive identification on the same day the bug is found.
- **The student is not excluded from school.**
- If the bug is identified as a bed bug, the School Nurse calls the parent and discusses the finding, school procedure for bed bugs and information on eliminating bed bugs.
- Daily for 5 days after the bed bug is identified, the student's belongings (coat, back pack, Chromebook case etc.) are kept in a sealed very large zip lock like bag. This is done in a way to ensure the student's privacy. The bag is inspected at the end of the school day for signs of bedbugs. If after 5 days, there are no signs of bedbugs then the bagging is stopped. If there are signs of bed bugs the bagging is continued until there is 5 consecutive days of no signs of bed bugs.
- Every time there is a confirmed bed bug at school, Monongalia County Schools Maintenance works closely with Pest Management to determine the most effective bed bug treatment.