

What you need to know about bed bugs in schools:

What are bed bugs? Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Bed bugs are reddish-brown in color, wingless, range from 1mm to 7mm (roughly the size of Lincoln's head on a penny), and can live several months without a blood meal. They DO NOT live on us like lice and some other insects.

How do I know if I have been bitten by a bed bug? When bed bugs bite, they inject an anesthetic and an anticoagulant that prevents a person from realizing they are being bitten. Most people do not realize they have been bitten until bite marks appear anywhere from one to several days after the initial bite. Some people have no reaction at all. The bite marks are similar to that of a mosquito or a flea – a slightly swollen and red area that may itch and be irritating. The bite marks may be random or appear in a straight line.

Can I get sick from bed bugs? Bed bugs are not known to spread any diseases to humans. However, their bites can become infected from scratching. The emotional distress and you not being able to sleep could possibly affect your health.

How do you get bed bugs? Bed bug infestations usually occur around or near the areas where people sleep. These areas include apartments, shelters, rooming houses, hotels, cruise ships, buses, trains, and dorm rooms. They hide during the day in places such as seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, inside cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper, or any other clutter or objects around a bed. Bed bugs have been shown to be able to travel over 100 feet in a night but tend to live within 8 feet of where people sleep.

Do schools get bed bugs? Bed bug infestations are continuing to spread, so more people are living with bed bugs than ever before. Students living with bed bugs at home will bring bed bugs to school. When bed bugs are seen by others on a student, their belongings or crawling in the classroom, people often react in panic demanding schools be closed and/or sprayed with insecticides. Seeing one or two bed bugs a day usually indicates a bed bug introduction. Schools may experience multiple bed bug introductions every year.

What is the difference between a bed bug introduction and a bed bug infestation? The school can be bed bug free one day and have bed bugs brought in the next. Bed bug prevention for schools is early detection so an infestation does not develop. It is unlikely bed bug infestations (breeding populations of bed bugs) will be found in schools because students are not sleeping in the classrooms at night when bed bugs are most active. This makes it difficult for the bed bug to take a blood meal and continue to produce more bed bugs.

To confirm a bed bug infestation, you should look for the following signs: 1. Dark spots (about this size: •) which are bed bug feces and may bleed on the fabric like a marker; 2. Eggs and eggshells, which are tiny (about 1mm) and white; 3. Skins that bed bug nymphs shed as they grow (look like hollow bed

bugs); 4. Live bed bugs; 5. Rusty or reddish stains on bed sheets or mattresses caused by bed bugs being crushed; 6. Bed bug bites which can be a sign but are NOT confirmation of an infestation.

What should I do if my child comes home with a notification letter from the school? Encourage your student to keep his or her backpack and coat isolated from other students' belongings as much as possible. Keep school bags and coats out of the bedroom and off the bed and couch. You are more likely to find bed bugs in the seams and crannies of the exterior of your student's backpack. When removing the contents of the backpack, place items on a table or desk, NOT the bed or couch. You can store the backpacks in a sealed plastic bag or sealable plastic container or plastic bin. You may also want to isolate coats in a similar fashion. If you do find bed bugs in your student's belongings, place the items in a hot dryer for 30 minutes.

How do I get rid of bed bugs if I have them in my home? The first step is an inspection of your home by a licensed pest control professional. Clean up efforts and proper treatment will be discussed with you. Follow up treatments and inspections will most likely be needed. It is extremely important to eliminate clutter in your home to reduce the hiding places for bed bugs.

Other tips: Pull the bed away from the wall to make it harder for bed bugs to get to you. Use a protective cover that encases mattresses and box springs. This will trap the bedbugs inside and help keep these items from becoming re-infested. Conduct regular inspections and cleaning of your home. Inspect anything you bring into your home, especially used items. Place bought or used clothing in a dryer on hot for 30 minutes. Stay away from refurbished beds, mattresses and couches.

If you do find bed bugs...Don't panic. Check headboards, mattresses/box springs and all furniture for the signs of an infestation. Vacuum infested areas and use a home steam cleaner for areas you cannot reach with the vacuum. Dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag by sealing it inside a trash bag before throwing away. Using retail insecticides may work on small infestations, but bed bugs are becoming resistant to many of the insecticides available to consumers. Remember non-chemical options such as vacuuming, reducing clutter and being on the lookout for bed bugs are an important part of bed bug control. Excessive use of insecticides or improper application can increase the potential for illness in humans. Many people have tried to get rid of bed bugs on their own only to make the problem worse and spread the bed bugs to other locations in their home.