

Bed bugs are spreading rapidly within the United States. Contact with bed bugs can occur anywhere, even at schools. It is important for schools to be informed about how to prevent a bed bug infestation and how to address the detection of bed bugs.

Since bed bugs are not known to transmit disease, students should not be excluded from school due to bed bugs. The school nurse or school administration should privately follow these guidelines with the student's dignity in mind.

Education is Key: Provide training for custodial, teaching, and nursing staff on bed bug identification. The training should include the following topics: identification of bed bugs and bed bug evidence, bed bug hiding spots and the school's bed bug response protocol.

Care for the Student

- Discreetly remove the student from the classroom so the school nurse or a qualified individual can perform an inspection of the student's clothing and belongings, including shoes, jackets, hats, books, backpacks, school supplies, etc.
- Place any of the student's items that may not be essential to the school day, such as book bags and coats, into a large plastic bag and tightly seal the bag.
- Heat kills bed bugs. If the school has a washer or dryer, the school may wash the student's clothing at the hottest recommended setting. Tumble dry the clothing on high heat for 30 minutes (120° F or above.)
- Check areas where the student sits or where the student's belongings may have been placed for extended periods of time. Bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers and can be found on various surfaces in many different locations.
- Take measures to minimize the amount of attention drawn to the student.

Collect a Specimen for Identification

- Collect a specimen using a tissue or a piece of gauze. Try not to crush the bug. Multiple specimens can be very helpful in identification of the insect.
- Dispose of additional bed bugs found by placing them in a tightly sealed bag and discarding the bag in an outdoor trash receptacle or dumpster. **VERY IMPORTANT: If a specimen is found on a student or the student's belongings, remove the specimen as instructed above, but do not send the student home. The parents should be immediately notified by the school nurse or the school administration if the specimen is a confirmed bed bug.**
- Contact the local health department or a pest management professional to assist in identification. The local health department may also consult with the Ohio Department of Health as needed.
- Do not send live specimens via any postal or shipping service.

Positive Identification of Bed Bugs: What to Do Next



After positive identification, the school administration or the school nurse should send the school community a parent or guardian notification letter and a bed bug fact sheet.

If the bed bug was found directly on a student or the student's belongings, the school administration or nurse should make direct contact with the student's parent or guardian and provide the following information:

- Instruct the parent or guardian to send the student to school with a sealable plastic bag containing a clean, freshly laundered change of clothes. The clothes should be washed at the hottest recommended setting and tumble dried on high heat for at least 30 minutes before being placed in the bag.
- Request that the parent or guardian send only essential items to school with the student. These items should be inspected upon arrival at school. The school may offer to keep non-essential items overnight to help ensure the items are bed bug free.
- Suggest keeping school items sealed in a plastic bag at home and limit items going back and forth from home to school until the infestation is under control.

Treating an Infestation

An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program should be implemented to help achieve long-term, environmentally sound pest control. An effective IPM approach incorporates a number of components, including education, thorough monitoring, identification of both chemical and non-chemical pest management techniques, accurate record keeping, and periodic program evaluation.

- Ongoing pest management should be overseen by the school administration.
- A properly licensed pest management company should be contracted to apply pesticides. A list of licensed pest management companies and applicators can be found at the Ohio Department of Agriculture's web site (www.agri.ohio.gov/apps/odaprs/pestfert-PRS-searchindex.aspx). Verify the company is experienced in bed bug treatment.

In addition to following an IPM program, the school administration should implement a protocol to treat areas where bed bugs are found. The following vacuuming procedures should be incorporated:

- Vacuum areas where bed bugs are found during the normal after-school cleaning schedule. Make sure floor and baseboards are included.
- Sprinkle about ¼ to ½ cup of talcum powder on the last section of floor to be vacuumed. The talc will help dry out and kill bed bugs in the bag or cup.
- Carefully remove the vacuum bag or contents of the bag-free vacuum container and place it in a tightly sealed plastic garbage bag or disposal.
- Dispose of the sealed bag in an outdoor trash can.
- Do not use the same vacuum bag in uninfested areas.
- When appropriate, heat the area to 120° F for a minimum of 30 minutes.

To help minimize the potential transfer of bed bugs or their eggs from one student's belongings to another, it is recommended to store each student's items (coat, backpack, lunch bag, etc.) separate from those of their classmates or in individual plastic containers labeled with the students' names. Coats hung next to each other and lunch bags stored together in a common container provide bed bugs an opportunity to relocate and to be transported home with an unknowing student.