

INFORMATION ON BED BUGS

Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease, but they are a public nuisance. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States is experiencing a resurgence in bed bug infestations. Recently, states have seen an increased number of bed bug infestations. As bed bugs infest more and more homes, they may find their way into schools. When this happens, the school staff should take action to prevent infestation.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small (full-grown adults are only a quarter-inch), brownish, flattened insects that feed on the blood of people while they sleep. Although the bite does not hurt at the time, it may develop into an itchy welt similar to a mosquito bite. Bed bugs do not transmit disease, but they can cause significant itchiness, anxiety, and sleeplessness. Usually, bed bugs hide during the day and only come out to feed during the night. Unlike head lice, they do not live on a person. However, they can “hitchhike” from one place to another in backpacks, clothing, luggage, books and other items.

Could my classroom or school be infested?

Actual bed bug infestations in schools are uncommon. More commonly, a few bed bugs will hitchhike to school from an infested home by hiding in a student’s clothing or backpack. Bed bugs that travel to school in one student’s backpack could be carried home by another student.

If bed bugs or any other nuisance bugs are found in the school, efforts should be made to collect and save specimens for identification. Bugs can be picked up with tweezers or other suitable utensils and sealed in plastic Ziploc-type bags. The identification of a bug should be done only by a licensed pest control staff person from the Service Operations Department.

What if one of my students presents with bug bites at school?

Students with any type of insect bite(s) should be sent to the health room. The school health aide will contact the parent or guardian to notify them and request that the parent seek medical advice for the student. Only a medical professional can make a diagnosis to determine the cause of the bite(s).

Students should not be excluded from school if they have been diagnosed with bed bug bites.

What if one of my students has an infestation at home?

When a student is dealing with an infestation at home, it is important to be sensitive to the problem. Although bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, there is still a stigma that can come with having bed bugs. As a result, parents may be hesitant to admit to having bed bugs in their home, and students may not want others to know they have an infestation at home. Students living in an infested home may also feel anxious or tired during the school day. Schools should work with the parents of any student living in an infested home to develop strategies for preventing the further spread of bed bugs.

- Backpacks, lunchboxes, and other items that travel back and forth to school can be inspected daily and stored in sealed plastic containers or plastic bags at home to prevent bed bugs from getting into them.
- At school, the student may be provided with plastic bags or bins in which to store their belongings to prevent bed bugs from spreading to other students' belongings.
- Continue to use these measures until successful treatment of the home has been verified.

More bed bug information and downloadable resources can be found on the Cuyahoga County Board of Health website: www.ccbh.net or www.cuyahogabedbugs.org

Bed Bug Identification

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mainly on human blood. A newly hatched bed bug is semitransparent, light tan in color, and the size of a poppy seed. Adult bed bugs are flat, have rusty, red-colored oval bodies, and are about the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs can be easily confused with other small household insects, including carpet beetles, spider beetles and newly hatched cockroaches (nymphs).

Bed Bug Bites

Some people do not react to bed bug bites. But for those who do, bite marks may appear within minutes or days, usually where the skin is exposed during sleep. They can be small bumps or large itchy welts. The welts usually go away after a few days. Because the bites may resemble mosquito and other insect bites, a bump or welt alone does not mean there are bed bugs. Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease. Bed bug bites can be very itchy and irritating. Most welts heal in a few days but in unusual cases, the welt may persist for several weeks. Usually, an anti-itching ointment will help, but if bites become infected, people should see their doctor.

Infesting Your Home

Bed bugs enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage and clothing, and by traveling along connecting pipes and wiring.

Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home.

Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs.

- When traveling, inspect the bed and furniture. Keep suitcases off the floor and bed, and inspect them before you leave.
- If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately wash and dry your clothing on hot settings or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can.
- Seal cracks and crevices with caulk, even if you don't have bed bugs. This will help prevent bed bugs and other pests from coming in.

Inspecting for Bed Bugs

Start by looking in an area 10-20 feet around where you sleep or sit. That's the distance a bed bug will usually travel. Keep a written record of every room and location where you find signs of bed bugs. Share this record with a pest control professional. Look for bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs (a flashlight and a magnifying glass will help).

- Check cracks and crevices in bedroom furniture, floorboards, and baseboards, windows and doorframes
- Remove and check zippers, seams and tufts in cushions of upholstered furniture, and their frames.
- Swipe a putty knife, or playing card into cracks and crevices to force bed bugs out. A hot hairdryer on a low setting will also work. If live bugs do come out, crush them with a paper towel and throw them away outside your home.
- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom, joints and even screw holes.
- Use a flashlight to inspect cracks and crevices of furniture, windows, and doorframes.
- **Check mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and bedding:**
 - Check the top and bottom seams, tufts and any rips in the covers of mattresses and box springs.
 - Look underneath the bed and along the bed frame and headboards.
- **Check walls and wall hangings:**
 - Using crevice tools, check paintings, posters, pictures, and mirrors.
 - Check cracks in plaster and peeling wallpaper.
 - Inspect the faceplates of electrical outlets and light switches (by eye only – do not insert anything into areas with wires). Look in phones, clocks, smoke detectors, and toys.
- **Getting Rid of Bed Bugs:**
 - Choosing and working with a pest control company: Bed bug infestations usually require the services of well-trained, licensed pest management professionals,

also called exterminators. There are many pest control companies and licensed pest professionals in Central Ohio. Not all are well trained in managing bed bugs. To get rid of bed bugs, you must choose the right company, be clear about what you want to be done and monitor performance.

- **Clean and Disinfect:**

- Get rid of clutter to reduce places bed bugs can hide. After checking them for bed bugs, consider putting non-essential belongings into storage until the bed bugs are gone from your home. Check all items again before returning.
- Wipe off dead bugs, bloodstains, eggs, and droppings with hot soapy water.
- Wash all items showing bed bug stains in hot water (140oF) and dry on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes. Other clean items suspected of having bed bugs should be placed in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes to kill bed bugs. After drying store items in sealed plastic bags until you are sure you have gotten rid of bed bugs.
- Vacuum carpets, floors, bed frames, furniture, cracks, and crevices daily, using the brush and crevice tools. Empty the vacuum or seal and dispose of its bag outside of your home after each use.
- Enclose infested mattresses and box springs in a cover that is labeled “allergen rated,” “for dust mites” or “for bed bugs” for at least a full year. Periodically check for rips or openings and tape these up.

- **Seal Cracks and Crevices:**

- Repair cracks in plaster, repair or remove any loose wallpaper and tighten light switch covers.
- Apply caulk to seal crevices and joints in baseboards and gaps on shelving or cabinets.

- **Getting Rid of Infested Items**

- Usually, it is not necessary to get rid of furniture or bedding at the first signs of bed bugs. Cleaning and enclosing are often adequate.
- Box springs should only be discarded if they cannot be covered and are heavily infested.
- Use plastic sheeting(shrink/pallet wrap) or place securely in plastic bags any items to be thrown away. Label with a sign that says “infested with bed bugs.”